

28 September 2022**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES / MONITORING OFFICER****UPDATE ON USE OF RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present Committee with an update on the use of resources by Councillors.

Information**Background**

2. At the meeting of Full Council on 10 May 2018, a revised Code of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted Members was agreed. The new Code included a range of protocols, including the Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources (attached for the Committee's reference at **Appendix A**). This Protocol's guiding principles include the need to be mindful of costs and not using resources for political purposes.
3. Governance and Ethics Committee is responsible for taking an overview of this issue and at its meeting of 7 September 2020, the Committee agreed to move to an annual reporting cycle on this issue – this report covers the period April 2021 – March 2022. Under the revised approach, the threshold for reporting printing and photocopying charges has been doubled to £20 to cover the new annual reporting cycle.

Printing and Photocopying Costs

4. The total printing and photocopying charges incurred by those Councillors that have exceeded the annual £20 threshold for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 are included in **Appendix B** along with charges incurred by Group support officers.
5. The Committee's views are sought on the expenditure and whether any further information or actions are required on specific items of expenditure

Out of Contract Charges – Calls and Data Usage

6. County Councillors are provided with smartphones and laptop devices from which calls can be made free of charge within the existing contract limits. At its meeting of 30 September 2021, the Committee agreed that a breakdown of out of contract charges for ICT equipment be included in future annual monitoring reports.

7. A breakdown of such charges are included in **Appendix C**.
8. It is recognised that Members might legitimately choose to use their ICT equipment to undertake their Council business whilst abroad on holiday. Prior to doing so, they should always speak with ICT officers in advance of such trips to ensure that any charges incurred can be kept to a minimum. All Members received a reminder about this issue following the Committee's decision to monitor such charges along with further advice from ICT about taking ICT equipment out of the country following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.
9. It should be noted that those Members that have incurred charges have where possible tried to minimise such charges and sought advice and support from ICT in that respect. Some of the charges are related to the use from abroad of SIM cards within devices, with a total daily charge of £7.00 applicable in such circumstances, regardless of usage volume. Any significant charges highlighted to Democratic Services have been flagged with the relevant Members at the earliest opportunity to try and prevent or reduce further charges.

Other Issues

10. As agreed by the Committee in January 2019, the Team Manager – Democratic Services, from his monitoring of the relevant Democratic Services budgets, will highlight any areas of concern on an ongoing basis (as per the out of contract charges issue highlighted above). Currently there are no other specific wider issues raising concerns.

Other Options Considered

11. None – the report provides an update on expenditure as required in the revised Code of Conduct and the revised Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources and seeks relevant approvals where required.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. To update the Committee and seek relevant approvals in line with the requirements of the revised Code of Conduct and the revised Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 1) Notes the relevant resources expenditure for the period March 2021 to April 2022 as detailed in Appendix B & C.
- 2) Considers whether there is any further information required or any actions required on specific items of expenditure.

Marjorie Toward

Service Director, Customers, Governance and Employees

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Constitutional Comments (LW – 28/07/22)

14. Governance and Ethics Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (RWK 28/07/2022)

15. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All