

16 October 2023

Agenda Item: 6

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES / MONITORING OFFICER**

UPDATE ON USE OF RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS

Purpose of the Report

1. This report updates the Committee on the use of resources by Councillors.

Information

2. At the meeting of Full Council on 10 May 2018, Council adopted the Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for the use of resources, the most recent version of the Protocol, which was updated for inclusion in the Members Induction Pack in 2021 to capture technical changes is attached as **Appendix A**. The Protocol's guiding principles include the need to be mindful of costs and not using resources for political purposes.
3. Governance and Ethics Committee takes an overview of this issue through receipt of annual update reports. This report covers the period April 2022 to March 2023.

Printing and photocopying costs

4. The threshold for reporting printing and photocopying charges is £20. The total printing and photocopying charges that have exceeded that threshold between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 are included in **Appendix B** along with charges incurred by Group support officers.

Out of contract charges – calls and data usage

5. County Councillors are provided with smartphones and laptop devices from which calls can be made free of charge within the existing contract limits. A breakdown of such charges is included in **Appendix C**.
6. At its meeting of 30 September 2021, the Committee considered the issue of Out of Contract Charges for ICT equipment. This mainly related to Members' willingness to continue to conduct Council business whilst holidaying abroad. As agreed by the Committee, Members were issued with further guidance but despite Members' best efforts, such charges are on occasions still being unknowingly incurred. It is hoped that the planned changes to arrangements for mobile data provision in November 2023 will help eradicate this issue. It is

therefore proposed that, following those changes, updated guidance regarding use of mobile phones and laptops when outside the UK be circulated to Members.

Other issues

7. As agreed by the Committee in January 2019, any areas of ongoing concern from the relevant Democratic Services budget will be highlighted on an ongoing basis (as with the out of contract charges issue highlighted above).

Other Options Considered

8. This report is required by the Councillors and Co-opted members Protocol for Use of Resources, supporting Committee in its oversight role.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

9. The report updates the Committee and provides an opportunity to seek any relevant approvals required by the Code of Conduct and the Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for the use of Resources.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. 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.

Financial Implications

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) Notes the relevant resources expenditure for the period April 2022 to March 2023 as detailed in Appendix B and Appendix C to the report.
- 2) Agrees that following the change to a new mobile provider in November 2023, further guidance to prevent the incurring of Out of Contract Charges be circulated to Members.
- 3) Considers whether there are any further actions required in respect of specific items of expenditure in lie with the Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources.

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Constitutional Comments (CEH 15.09.2023)

12. 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 (SES 15/09/2023)

13. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this 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