

REPORT

To: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE		Subject: MEMBERS' EQUIPMENT: BROADBAND LINKS
From: DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION		
Date: 5 October 2004	Ref: JAF/IL	

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report advises the Committee of progress made in providing a facility for broadband communication links between elected members' homes and the corporate IT network.

2. **Background**

- 2.1 Currently ISDN dial up connections are used to link IT equipment in members' homes with corporate systems: for reasons of security it has not, hitherto, been possible to use broadband connections for this purpose, but a key action in the Administration Departmental Service Improvement Plan for 2003/2004 is to evaluate the use/benefits of broadband connections.

3. **Progress**

- 3.1 The ability to access broadband is not uniform throughout North Lanarkshire but, for the areas where broadband links are available, following exhaustive work by the IT Services Division of the Department of Finance, there have now been identified appropriate broadband links together with measures to address the security issues attendant on the use of broadband.
- 3.2 Now that the security issues have been resolved, it is anticipated that broadband links can provide an improved service, particularly in terms of speed of access. Speed of access will, however, be dependent on the number of persons in the area simultaneously connecting to broadband at any given time and it is possible – although anticipated to be unlikely – that broadband connection will not provide a significantly better service in terms of speed.
- 3.3 It is, however, anticipated that broadband connection will provide cost benefit. The cost of the security broadband connection is, currently, £29.99 per month. This is a fixed charge with no additional call charges and results in a total recurring annual cost of £359.88. The comparable costs for an ISDN line are quarterly line rental of £93.00 together with charges for the time the line is in use. The average cost of members' line rental and utilisation in 2003/2004 was £434.00.
- 3.4 There are, in addition, one-off costs. An ISDN line connection costs £249.00 for each installation. The cost of converting an existing ISDN line to broadband is £42.55 and in instances in which an additional phone extension has to be installed, the cost is £139.70.
- 3.5 The terms of the ISDN line contract require the Council to commit itself to one year's ISDN line use. Following the expiry of that period of twelve months for each ISDN line connection, the ISDN contract can be terminated without penalty.

4. **Considerations**

4.1 Having regard to the prospects of improved service and having regard, also, to the potential for cost savings, it is considered that the Council should take forward the use of broadband connection.

5. **Proposals**

5.1 It is proposed that

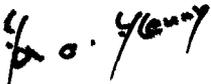
- five elected members who are now either embarking for the first time on use of members' home-based computing links or have had an ISDN connection for a period in excess of twelve months be now connected by means of broadband to the corporate IT network;
- those members be asked to provide feedback on reliability and speed of access;
- subject to satisfactory feedback on performance – and with the agreement of the members concerned – existing ISDN lines be replaced with broadband links at a point where cost savings can be achieved;

and

- to minimise disruption and ensure continuity, this exercise be undertaken on a phased basis in order of frequency of use.

6. **Recommendation**

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the foregoing proposals.



Director of Administration

Members seeking further information on the contents of this report are asked to contact John Fleming, Head of Central Services on Extension 2228.