

REPORT

To: CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: BLACKBERRY PILOT SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
From: HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES		
Date: 20 August 2007	Ref: JAF/BN	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporate Services Committee with a summary of the findings of a recent survey elected members who are blackberry users.

2. Background

2.1 Eleven elected members participated in the blackberry pilot.

2.2 Blackberry devices give the ability to

- read, reply, forward and create emails from the hand held device when away from the office
- make and receive telephone calls
- maintain diary/calendar
- maintain address book entries
- gives browser access
- utilise notes feature

2.3 blackberry devices currently cost £185 to buy. Additional recurring costs are monthly rental of £26 plus call charges.

3. Survey of Elected Members using Blackberry devices - Summary of Findings

All elected members who participated in the pilot completed the survey giving a response rate of 100%

- six found the device 'easy to use' or 'very easy to use'
- five found the device 'not particularly easy to use' or 'not easy at all'
- eight elected members indicated their expectations were either 'fully or partially met' and three indicated their expectations were 'not met'
- eight used email regularly
- one used the telephone feature regularly
- four used the diary/calendar regularly
- two used the address book regularly and
- two used the notes feature regularly
- one used the alarm feature regularly
- one used the calculator

a.

Advantages of using blackberry identified by members were

- 'being able to see emails without going on line'
- 'home access can be time consuming and difficult and the blackberry allows me instant remote access to email'
- 'helpful for people for work or if they are away a lot on Council business'
- 'a godsend for a working councillor'
- 'gives access to check emails and able to send emails without being in the Civic Centre'
- 'as I work the blackberry enables me to pick up and reply to urgent emails. It is better than phone as you have something in black and white. Saves trouble trying to constantly talk to people taking messages'
- 'size, portability, ease of use'
- 'provides an anchor for communication interchange for people working from multiple locations'

Disadvantages of using blackberry identified were

- device too large and clumsy'
 - 'buttons too small'
 - 'no spell check'
 - 'hard to turn off'
 - 'does not handle some formats well'
 - 'internet browsing'
- nine members were either 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with the coverage
 - six members considered the blackberry represents value for money whilst four considered the blackberry did not present value for money and one did not answer this question
 - in overall terms, eight members were 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with the blackberry
 - nine members considered that a mobile phone did not have any functionality the blackberry could not perform
 - one member commented that mobiles are 'slimmer to put in pocket'
 - when asked if it were possible to have either a mobile phone or a blackberry seven members chose the blackberry and four a mobile phone.

4. Considerations

4.1 Against this background there would appear to be a justification, if a financial package was available, to put together a range of options to meet the needs of Councillors who have a need for remote access to emails and diaries and to offer members a choice of mobile device.

4.2 There are now a range of blackberry models which come in various shapes and sizes.

4.3 As a result of emerging technology several new mobile computing devices have recently entered the market place and E-Government and Service Development Division of Finance and Customer Services are currently evaluating the new devices.



4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Corporate Services Committee is requested to authorise the Head of Central Services to liaise with Head of E-Government and Service Development to ascertain if, following satisfactory IT evaluation, a wider range of mobile devices can be made available for elected members remote access.
- 4.2 The outcome of the IT evaluation of new mobile devices including current price plans will be reported together with the recommended range of devices from which elected members can choose one to meet their remote access needs.
- 4.3 There will be reported, also, the extent to which options can be funded from available resources.

J. S. Fleming

Head of Central Services

Local Government Access to Information Act: For information on this report please contact, the appropriate John Fleming, Head of Central Services, Telephone 01698 302228