

Proposal to move to paperless agendas

The Council has a duty to reduce carbon emissions from its operations and one of the actions in the draft Climate Change Action plan is to reduce the Council's use of paper and postage.

An area where there is high spend on paper and postage is in producing agendas for committees and Full Council.

Council agendas have increased over recent years and are sometimes several hundred pages long. This not only increases paper and printing, it also leads to much higher postage costs.

There are additional costs in staff time to prepare, print and post the agendas.

This proposal puts forward options to support the Council's net zero target by moving to paperless agendas by January 2026.

Background

In November 2023 Group Leaders were consulted by Democratic Services about providing councillors with tablets, instead of producing paper agendas and reports.

The feedback was varied, with a request for different options being available to allow councillors to choose how they wanted to receive documents. Some councillors would be happy to use their own devices to read agendas, some would prefer a council device to be provided, while others feel more comfortable with a paper copy.

Currently the Council spends around £9,000 a year printing committee and council agendas. There are additional postage costs, which can be very high. A 400 page agenda currently costs £3.49 to post (second class). Agendas are posted out to councillors before each committee.

From May 2022 to May 2023, there were 52 meetings for which the Council printed approximately 57,000 individual pieces of paper in the form of reports and agendas.

Currently, 41 councillors receive paper copies of agendas. Two councillors have opted out of receiving paper agendas.

Proposals

To support the Council's drive to net zero, the Climate Change Working Group is recommending the proposals outlined below to move to paperless agendas and the provision of tablets, subject to cost, where needed.

Proposals for a phased approach to moving to paperless agendas

Proposals	Owners	Dates
Short term quick wins		
Ensure councillors are aware of the impact to the environment and cost savings which can be achieved by reducing paper usage.	Giuseppina Valenza Gaye O'Brien Democratic Services	October 2024
Provide additional support and training on ModGov which has a range of features for accessing and annotating documents.	Democratic Services	October/November 2024
Encourage councillors to access agendas on the committee system and print only what they need at home.	Democratic Services	October 2024
Identify how many councillors would be willing to use their own device and are happy to opt out of receiving paper copies.	Democratic Services	October 2024
Provide printed committee papers only for members of the committee if needed.	Democratic Services	October 2024
If a paper copy is required, ask councillors to collect one on the night of the committee or Full Council.	Democratic Services	October 2024
Ensure all committee papers are recycled after each committee	Councillors Democratic Services	October 2024 onwards
Long term		
Identify how many councillors would use a device (tablet) provided by the Council, if they do not want to use their own device.	Democratic Services	October 2024
<i>Subject to the number of devices needed and the cost:</i> Provide devices and software which can be used for reading agendas, making notes, annotations and comments, as well as for councillor e-mails. Provide training on accessing and using ModGov.	Democratic Services	January-April 2025
Reduce the size of agendas by writing shorter concise reports.	Extended Management Team, Key Officer Forum	January 2025
Provide background papers online only.		
Pilot paperless agenda committees	Democratic Services	May 2025 onwards. One/two committees a month. Dates to be confirmed.
No paper agendas will be provided, unless there is a valid reason to do so, eg medical.	Democratic Services	January 2026