

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET 25th January 2007****ICT Projects Resources**

OPEN	
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Delivering Quality Services
KEY PRIORITY:	Utilising new Technologies
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr John-Paul Campion
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
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APPENDICES	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To request Cabinet's approval for the utilisation of £23,400 from the capital expenditure reserve approved by Council 23rd February 2005.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is asked to approve the utilisation of £23,400 from the capital expenditure reserve.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council approved a capital service option for £250,000 on 23rd February 2005 "To identify resources for ICT investment including a corporate and Benefits Workflow/Document Image Processing (DIP)".
- 3.2 £50,000 of the reserve was utilised during 2006 as part of the implementation of a new DIP and workflow system in Benefits.
- 3.3 Cabinet approved £85,000 in November 2006 for ICT project resources.

4. ICT PROJECTS

- 4.1 The Electoral Registration Officer has identified 2 further projects that need additional investment to enable them to be implemented in a reasonable timescale. The projects are :-

4.1.1 Postal Voting - Signature Recognition Software

As a result of new legislation, the Electoral Registration Officer is required to collect personal identifiers (signature and date of birth) from all registered postal voters in January/ February 2007 (cost paid for by government grant) and in April 2007, using new signature recognition software, to match this

information against signatures and date of birth provided on the postal vote statement. This is a declaration signed by the voter and accompanies individual postal ballot papers. Funding for this software (and user licences) is to be provided by government but, for local authorities with less than 10,000 registered postal voters the grant will not meet the total costs involved.

For local authorities with less than 10,000 postal voters grant will be paid at the rate of 99p per registered absent voter. We have 8,700 registered voters which gives a grant of £8,600. The software server licence, including 1 client access licence will cost £12,000 in 2007/08 and £7,500 in both 2008/09 and 2009/10. This means a net cost after applying the government grant, of £18,400 over the 3 year agreement period. Representations to Government by individual local authorities and the Association of Electoral Administrators have so far fallen on 'deaf-ears'.

We have no choice in terms of having to have the software and as existing budgets are insufficient to cover the costs it would seem appropriate that the capital expenditure reserve is used.

4.1.2 Replacement of Electoral Registration and Elections Management domain software

The current Electoral Registration and Elections management software is DOS based and we have known for a number of years that the supplier was working towards replacing it with a windows based service.

Unfortunately, despite pressure having been applied over a period of time by user groups, the supplier Northgate Pickwick have never been able to say with any certainty when the new Windows option would be 'rolled-out'. At a meeting held on the 11th January 2007, to receive a demonstration of part of the personal identifier software, they advised that the first module, Electoral Registration would be available in April 2007 with the Elections Management element to follow in September. The additional cost of the new windows package will be £5,000. As no budget provision has been made for this, it is proposed to meet this additional funding from the capital expenditure reserve.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The overall cost for the above two projects will be £23,400. This means that there would be £91,600 remaining in the reserve. Included in the 2007/10 Financial Strategy is a proposal to utilise £25,000 to engage consultants to carry out a study into current and future ICT requirements. This would leave a projected £66,600 for corporate DIP and workflow projects or further ICT investment.

7. **LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal and policy implications arising from the projects overview.

9. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

9.1 The implications of not taking actions may lead to the Electoral Registration Officer not being able to meet his statutory obligations.

10. Consultees

10.1 Head of Financial Services, Information Technology Manager and the ICE Group.