

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Digital Services Sub-Committee	26 March 2021
<b>Subject:</b> Modern.gov app – Digital Access to Committee Documentation	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	5, 8, 9, 10, 11
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> The Town Clerk and The Chamberlain	<b>For Decision</b>
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## SUMMARY

The Committee and Member Services Team, in collaboration with the IT-Technology Support Team, is looking at ways to enhance user participation at committee meetings and support paper-free ways of working by assessing existing products on the market which will allow Members and officers to access committee papers electronically.

Whilst longer term options around broader functionality (such as e-voting) continue to be explored, access to and use of electronic committee papers before/during meetings can be progressed on the basis that an existing solution is available, this can be rolled out to Members at no additional cost and should be of immediate benefit to many Members.

The City Corporation has used Modern.gov as its committee management software since 2013; one of over 300 clients in a wide range of sectors using the system. This software allows the Committee and Member Services Team to manage a wide range of data associated with Members, Co-opted Members, Committees and outside body appointments. Modern.gov provides a complete governance and meeting solution which supports paperless working through an application that is available for Apple, Android or Windows and can be installed on any City Corporation or personal device. The app allows users to securely view and annotate the latest documents associated with a committee meeting once they are published, including all non-public papers and supplementary packs (late reports). Whilst this app has been available for some years, in 2020 the app was refreshed to provide enhanced functionality and a better user experience.

The past year has been a catalyst for those within the City Corporation (Members and officers) to work in different ways and move to an almost paper-free committee

management operation. It is now an appropriate time to further bed-in these new ways of working by encouraging Members to utilise the Modern.gov app to review and manage their committee documentation.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that: -

- (i) all current members of the Digital Services Sub-Committee participate in a pilot between March and end of June 2021 and use the Modern.gov app to view/manage all committee-related documentation;
- (ii) Members provide feedback to the Committee and Member Services and IT-Technology Support Teams about their user experience by the end of June 2021;
- (iii) Members attend training, where necessary, to support use of the Modern.gov app;
- (iv) a report, setting out feedback from the pilot and an assessment of its future use from both a user and digital solution perspective, be submitted to the Digital Services Sub-Committee on 23 July 2021; and
- (v) subject to the outcomes of the pilot, the Sub-Committee make recommendation to the Finance Committee and the Court of Common Council that a paper-free approach (unless by exception) by all Members and officers, in respect of access to committee papers, be adopted by March 2022.

## **Background**

1. The City Corporation has used Modern.gov as its committee management software since 2013; one of over 300 clients on a wide range of sectors using the system including local authorities, housing associations, fire authorities, health and higher education. This system allows the Committee and Member Services Team to manage a wide range of data associated with Members, Co-opted Members, Committees and outside body appointments.
2. This system enables the team to (i) create agendas and minutes of all City of London Corporation meetings that are managed through the Town Clerk's department and publish this information to the City Corporation webpages in accordance with the Local Government Act; to manage and publish the Members' Registers of Interest; manage the Members' webpages i.e. add a biography and a photograph; and ensure that transparent and efficient governance practices are in operation across a very complex committee structure.
3. Modern.gov provides a complete governance and meeting solution which supports paperless working through an application that is available for Apple, Android or Windows devices. The app allows users to securely view and annotate the latest documents associated with a meeting once any papers are published, including all non-public papers and supplementary packs (late reports).
4. Whilst this app has been available for some years and some Members of the Court have utilised the app, a full-Court roll out was previously unsuccessful

and some Members found that the app had limitations in terms of operating paper-free.

## **Current Position**

5. In early 2020 the Modern.gov app was refreshed to provide enhanced functionality and a better user experience when accessing and reviewing committee documentation. The Covid-19 pandemic prevented the roll-out of the app to Members due to other priorities affecting both the Committee and Member Services Team and the IT-Technology Support team, principally implementation and management, at pace, of virtual meeting arrangements and access to on-line meetings by Members.
6. The past year has encouraged those within the City Corporation (Members and officers) to work in very different ways and move to an almost paper-free committee management operation. It makes sense to take build on the momentum and enhance newer ways of working with the roll-out of a refreshed application which should provide most Members with a seamless approach to managing their committee papers in a secure manner, across a range of devices.
7. There there are some clear benefits for an individual who utilises the app including: not having to carry large agenda packs, less/nil risk of losing agenda packs whilst commuting, all papers are easily accessible in one device rather than in multiple hard-copy packs or contained as PDFs in multiple emails that are sent to Members; ability to retain documents for up to five years in the app, ability to annotate, comment and bookmark specific text/areas within a document. Further to this, there are also broader considerations within the corporate context including: enhanced and more effective use by Members of the technology that is provided to them in their role as Common Councillors and Aldermen; there are no additional cost implications by adopting a paper-free approach; a roll-out of digital solutions to support the decision-making process and those operating within it supports a number of corporate and strategic implications (paragraph 13).
8. Whilst a move towards a wholly paper-free approach to the circulation and management of committee documentation would be ideal, it is important to recognise that different users may have different accessibility requirements and, in some instances, the app will not be appropriate for an individual. Therefore, taking into account the City Corporation's Public Sector Equality Duty, whilst an all-Member roll-out of the app is proposed longer term, and subject to feedback from this proposed trial, alternative options in respect of access to committee documentation, would need to be available.

## **Proposal**

9. Given the rapid move to different ways of working over the past 12 months whereby everyone is, by and large, working on-line more than ever before, we are keen to roll the Modern.gov app out to all Members and further champion

the solutions that are available to help both officers and Members participate in the committee process as fully, and as easily, as possible. Alongside this intention, it is hoped that there will be a longer-term commitment to paper-free ways of working by everyone in the organisation, including elected and Co-opted Members.

10. Having consulted the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Digital Services Sub-Committee about the current position and how a wider roll-out of the new app may be beneficial to Members, it is proposed that a pilot take place involving all members of the Sub-Committee so officers can assess a number of issues ahead of a wider roll out to all members of the Court of Common Council. This will include:

- User issues (Members/Co-opted Members/Officers) and how best to assist Members with navigation and use of the app
- Device considerations and possible limitations (iPad, Laptop, corporate and personal devices)
- Set-up issues
- Security issues
- Interoperability

11. All members of the Digital Services Sub-Committee were contacted about the pilot on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and invited to select a date/time at which a short installation process could be completed ahead of this meeting. Some existing app users (from across the Court) have also been contacted and the new app has been installed on their devices to allow restricted access. The Committee Team is also using the app and all officers in that and the IT Technology Support Team are fully trained so they can support a wider roll-out and future use of the app.

12. It is hoped that, subject to feedback from Members involved in the pilot, the Digital Services Sub-Committee will champion a wider roll-out of the app to all Members of the Court within a specified timescale, possibly on a mandatory basis (notwithstanding the caveat expressed at paragraphs 8 and 15). It is proposed that the pilot conclude in late June 2021 so feedback arising from the pilot can be reported back to the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 23 July 2021.

### **Corporate, Strategic and Equalities Implications**

13. This pilot aligns with the City Corporation's Responsible Business Strategy (2018-2023) which will support the achievement of the three aims and twelve outcomes in the Corporate Plan and is one of the main mechanisms for delivering Outcome 5 'Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible.'

14. This proposal aligns with and will support delivery of the Corporate Plan in respect of ensuring that: -

- we are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive;
- we inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration; and

- we have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
15. This proposal is also consistent with the City Corporation's Information Strategy 2018-2023 and Information Management Policy 2021.
16. As referenced in paragraph 8, taking into account the City Corporation's Public Sector Equality Duty, whilst an all-Member roll-out of the app is proposed longer term, alternative options in respect of access to committee documentation would need to be available.

## **Conclusion**

17. The Committee and Member Services Team, in collaboration with the IT-Technology Support Team, is looking at ways to enhance user participation at committee meetings by assessing existing products on the market which will allow Members and officers to access, with ease, committee documentation electronically. The City Corporation has used Modern.gov as its committee management software since 2013 and as part of its digital offer, a complete governance and meeting solution which supports paperless working through an application is available for Apple, Android or Windows devices. The app allows users to securely view and annotate the latest documents associated with a meeting once any papers are published, including all non-public papers and supplementary packs (late reports).
18. For the reasons set out in the report, it is proposed that the Moder.gov app be rolled out to all Members of the Court of Common Council, subject to feedback from members of the Digital Services Sub-Committee who are invited to participate in a pilot between now and the end of June 2021. Feedback from that pilot and an assessment of the app will thereafter be submitted to the Sub-Committee for consideration on 23 July 2021.

## **Background Papers**

- <https://www.civica.com/en-gb/product-pages/moderngov/>
- Responsible Business Strategy 2018-2023 (City of London Corporation)
- Digital Sustainability Strategy (City of London Corporation)
- Information Management Strategy 2018-2023 (City of London Corporation)
- Information Management Policy 2021 (City of London Corporation)

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