

Committee(s)	Dated:
Culture, Heritage and Libraries	10 July 2017
Subject: Future of the City of London Corporation Members' Pocket Book	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Julie Mayer – Committee and Member Services Officer	

Summary

For many years the City of London Corporation has produced a hard copy pocket book for Members and Aldermen. In 2014, in response to a request for Service Based Review savings, the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee asked for a working party to be set up to look at its long term production.

In January 2015, the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee agreed to produce a more cost-effective pocket book, with a 50% saving on production costs, and to defer a decision on future production until after the 2017 City Elections. Members are asked to note that, in 2015, the Aldermen abolished their printed pocket book and, last year, 30% of Common Councilmen did not collect their pocket books.

Whilst some Members like the convenience of a printed pocket book; 28 Members are now completely paperless and most are regular users of their i-pad/i-phone. Both the diary pages and the information pages in the electronic version are easily accessible from an i-pad or i-phone and more efficiently updated. Since 2015, both printed and electronic copies have been provided in tandem and the electronic version has been very well received. If we produce an electronic version in house, using the Committee's agenda production software, the regular updates of the electronic pocket book will be of a higher quality.

Calendar appointments for all meetings are automatically entered and updated into the Outlook diary of all Members who use their "@cityoflondon.gov.uk" email address but if some Members prefer the option of a simple pocket diary; dates can be provided on request. Furthermore, there are now alternative ways of accessing all of the content on the information pages, as this information is readily available on line. Members can easily contact all other Members and Officers via the global email address book.

The pros and cons of the printed pocket book are summarised in Appendix 1 to this report.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to approve one of the following two options for the future production of the Members' pocket book:

1. Production of the printed pocket book cease forthwith, to be replaced by an electronic version, circulated at least quarterly, with basic pocket diaries provided to Members on request. (*The saving of £6,000 per annum would contribute towards the 2% efficiency savings required for 2018/19*).
2. All pocket book production cease forthwith, given that all of the information is available on line, with basic pocket diaries provided to Members on request.

Main Report

Background

1. For many years the City of London Corporation has produced a pocket book for Members and Aldermen. In 2014, in response to a request for Service Based Review savings, the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee asked for a working party to look at its long term production and possible economies in its production.
2. In January 2015, the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee agreed to produce a more cost-effective pocket book, achieving a 50% cost saving, but defer a decision on future production until after the 2017 City Elections. In 2015, the Aldermen abolished their printed pocket book and, in 2016, 30% of Common Councilmen did not collect their books.
3. Whilst we understand that some Members like the convenience of a printed pocket book; 28 Members are now completely paperless, 68% of Members have been issued with i-pads and/or i-phones and, of 152 electronic devices issued to Members, only 17 are inactive. Since 2015, printed and electronic versions of the pocketbook have been provided in tandem and the electronic version has been very well received.
4. The diary pages in the electronic version are very easily accessible from an i-Pad or i-Phone. Calendar appointments for all meetings are automatically entered into the Outlook diary of all Members who use their “@cityoflondon.gov.uk” email address and are automatically updated if there are any changes. Members can easily contact each other and officers in the City of London Corporation via the global email address book. Furthermore, there are now alternative ways of accessing all of the information pages as this information is readily available on line and regularly updated.
5. For the past two years, Committee and Member Services have been providing an electronic (pdf) version of the pocket book, alongside a printed version. However, as we have been working with an external printers’ proof, further edits (beyond very minor updates) have been limited by the range of tools within Adobe software and, as more edits are made throughout the year, the quality of the regular updates is compromised. Despite these limitations, the electronic version of the pocket book has received positive feedback from Members.

Current Position

6. The most obvious advantage to an electronic pocket book is that updates can be made at regular intervals throughout the year, without waiting for an annual reprint, and any errors can be spotted immediately and corrected, whereas the printed version needs continual manual updating by the user.
7. Another limitation of the printed pocket book is that it can only be proofed as an A4 draft. Once one book is printed, cost is incurred for the entire production and, given its small size and complexity; there is a margin for printing slippage errors when the proofs are scaled down. Last year some committee dates on the diary pages slipped, making these entries incorrect. Notwithstanding the risk of print errors, very often the pocket book is out of date as soon as it is delivered to Members, for example, Grand Committee dates are set up to 2 years in advance but there are occasions when we need to change them.
8. From this year, the Committee and Members Services Team will be able to produce an electronic version, using our committee management system's software. In addition to having access to a wider range of editing tools and therefore producing a higher quality document, it can also be bookmarked for easy access on i-Phones and i-Pads. If Members like the convenience of a pocket diary, we can provide one on request. The current version of the pocket book has diary pages up to March 2018.

Options

9. The Committee is asked to consider the following options in respect of future production:
 - (i) That the printed pocket book remain in its current version, at a cost of approximately £6,000 per annum, plus officer time in preparing, proofing and production and additional officer time in creating an electronic version, to enable Members to receive better quality edits than are possible from using a printers' proof.
 - (ii) That production of the printed pocket book cease forthwith, to be replaced by an electronic version, circulated at least quarterly, with pocket diaries provided to Members on request. The saving of £6,000 per annum would contribute towards the 2% efficiency savings required for 2018/19. *If Members are minded to approve the adoption of an electronic pocket book, the Committee and Member Services Team will be happy to receive comments and suggestions on its effectiveness.*
 - (iii) That all pocket book production cease forthwith, given that all of the information is available on line, with basic pocket diaries provided to Members on request.

Implications

12. The cost of printing the pocket book is approximately £6,000 per annum, plus officer time in preparing, proofing and printing. Whilst there will still be officer time required in producing and maintaining an electronic version; keeping this task within the team and maximising the use of our committee management system will be more cost effective, more efficient and result in higher quality edits. However, if we keep both a printed and electronic version there will be additional resource implications.
13. Members are asked to note that the next round of efficiency savings, commencing in 2018/19, will seek to make a 2% budget reduction in each financial year, over a 3 year period, with no inflationary increase, giving an overall cumulative savings requirement of 15%. Members are asked to consider a modern and cost-effective alternative, which will help contribute towards this requirement.

Conclusion

14. Given that the majority of the information contained in the pocket book is now available on line; the ease of use of an electronic pocket book and its accessibility on an i-phone, which is actually less bulky than a pocket book or an i-pad, and the growing appetite for paperless working, Members are asked to give consideration to a more modern approach, which will help to achieve future efficiency savings.

Appendices

Pros and Cons of a printed pocket book diary.

Background information

New Members will be emailed the most recent version of the electronic pocket book, noting that the quality of the edits will improve with the proposals as set out in the report.

If new Members would like to see the 2016 edition of the hard copy pocket book, spare copies are available from the Committee and Member Services Team.

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APPENDIX

Pros and cons for continuing production of a printed pocket book

Pros

- Some Members like the compactness and convenience of the pocket book and particularly the diary pages.
- Not all Members routinely use IT.
- The pocket book is popular with City of London Corporation partners and stakeholders but, with the Committee's consent, we can circulate an electronic version more widely.

Cons

- The printed pocket book can go out of date very quickly, sometimes even before they are delivered to Members!
- They are becoming less popular, given that 30% of Members did not collect their pocket books last year and the Aldermen abolished theirs in 2015.
- There have been negative comments about the bulkiness of the cheaper hard copy version with cardboard covers.
- Updates can be made to an electronic version at regular intervals throughout the year, without waiting for an annual reprint, and any errors can be spotted immediately and corrected.
- The electronic version, which has been available since 2015, has been well received by Members.
- Of 152 i-phones and i-pads issued to Members, only 17 are inactive. The pdf version and diary pages can be loaded onto iPads and iPhones and bookmarked.
- i-phones are less bulky than pocket books. (If Members prefer a hardcopy diary, we can provide one on request).