

CABINET

10 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

A.8 MEMBER ACCESS TO COUNCIL BUILDINGS

(Report prepared by Damian Williams and Carol Schleip)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider a request from the Executive Leader to review Member access to Council Offices.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 20 July 2009 the Cabinet considered a report from the Head of Human Resources and Customer Services and made the decision that Members should only have direct access to the Connaught Room, Chairman's Parlour and Members' Rooms and that in other circumstances all access to Council office accommodation should be on an appointment basis and via Reception facilities. (Decision 1752).

This decision was subsequently called in by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 July 2009 when it was resolved that the Committee did not agree with the Cabinet's decision. Subsequently Full Council on 17 September 2009 (Minute 57) resolved that the Council does object to the decision as it considers it is contrary to the Policy Framework and that therefore Executive Decision No 1752 was rescinded.

Since that time, the Council has had a growing awareness of its security responsibilities for example legislation contained in the Data Protection Act and the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSX) Code of Connection which imposes further restrictions and limits information on a need to know basis. This includes specific recommendations on PC screens and information contained on desktops. Risk Assessment has identified that we should be restricting unlimited access to all office sites during working hours. Currently officers have restricted access to sensitive areas based on the need to carry out their duties and It is proposed that Member access should be similarly restricted. A number of options are listed below.

The existing door access system will allow for changes to individual or group access permissions to restrict the level of access provided. Three options are available and are shown below:

Option 1: Restrict Member access and only allow free movement within the Town Hall civic areas, e.g., the Connaught Room, Chairman's Parlour and Member officers. Access to other areas within the Town Hall and other office accommodation sites would be denied and Members requiring access to any other secure areas within the Town Hall and other office accommodation sites would be required to report to the relevant Reception desk in the same way as other visitors to gain access to offices/officers. This would have a cost of approximately £3,000 to provide wiring and door access from the stairs into Housing Services.

Option 2: Restricts all member access to all office accommodation sites. Members requiring access to any office accommodation sites would then need to report to reception desks in the same way as other visitors to gain access to offices/officers.

Option 3: To provide a higher level of security to further restrict access within the Town Hall by adding additional control units and swipe readers to any existing doors or new areas identified – these areas would mainly be remote offices. There would be a cost associated with this option

depending on what our risk assessment identify.

Unison has been consulted and they would prefer Member access to be limited and for Members to make appointments when visiting Council offices.

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That Cabinet determine whether they wish to make changes to the arrangements for Member access to Council buildings.
- (b) That Cabinet determine whether they wish to proceed with any of the options set out in the report.
- (c) That if Cabinet are minded to select option three, that they indicate the nature of the changes they wish to implement.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

The implications vary depending on the choice of options. Option one and three would cost between £3,000 (Option One) and up to £10,000 (Option Three) depending on what security measures were identified by Risk Assessment which has not been budgeted for.

LEGAL

The proposed actions are within the Council's discretionary powers.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This matter has been considered and any review of security improvements include crime and disorder implications.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The current door access system is a computer controlled system using swipe cards to gain access to secure areas. Access to each site is controlled on an individual basis, with the level of access based upon the level of permission granted to that user.

The degree of control can vary from complete exclusion to access to individual doors or complete access to all areas. The levels of access are also time controlled as well as date controlled, i.e. cards can be programmed to remove any access permissions after a certain period of time or by a particular date. All card activities (each time the card is swiped through a reader) are recorded and can be viewed for up to three months after the event.

The current security doors are shown on the attached plans, see Appendices A-D. The Council operates a number of access groups within the security system that provide differing levels of access to the offices at a variety of times and in some cases a limited number of doors, it also enables Services to operate beyond the normal opening hours.

The existing system was originally set up to prevent unauthorised access to secure areas, and to minimise the impact on staff movement within those secure areas. To that end only a limited number of doors were included as part of the door access system. However, the system could easily be expanded to improve security in more sensitive areas simply by increasing the number of control units and adding swipe card readers to those areas that require additional security.

It is also worthwhile mentioning that the security to the building does not solely rely on the door Access system. Staff would need to be educated, not to allow Members into offices without being escorted. Intruder alarms are in operation at all office sites, and recently a programme of upgrades has been undertaken to move away from issuing a four digit code to staff to the use of a security fob that is used to set and un-set the alarm system. Fobs are only issued to officers that have been identified as requiring 'out of hours' access to the buildings. No fobs are issued to Members. In the event that someone accesses an office building without offsetting the alarm then an alarm is activated and a Police response is triggered

CURRENT POSITION

CURRENT MEMBER ACCESS

All Members as well as staff are issued with a swipe card which serves both as an identity card and as a door access card to Council office accommodation sites. Swipe cards for Members are currently programmed to allow the following access;

Monday – Friday access through external doors 08:45 – 17:15

Monday – Friday access through internal doors 24hr

This currently allows Members unrestricted access to offices and staff during working hours, and in some instances 'out of hours' for attendance at Committee meetings.

OPTIONS TO INCREASE THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SECURITY

The current swipe card system was introduced in 1995 and has worked well. However, the current security levels were set at that time and have remained the same since the initial installation.

Any reprogramming of the access levels in relation to the existing security doors would be at no cost and could be completed in a relatively short timescale depending upon the changes required. Simple changes to access levels and permissions could be completed within the same day that they are requested. Expansion of the current system to include additional doors would be at a cost.

The Executive leader has requested that the available options are identified and to this end they are shown below;

OPTION 1

To use the existing system to provide a range of access levels to Members restricted to the Town Hall to provide Members access to secure areas where there are a number of rooms within these areas that are currently used for Officer, Member and Civic functions, i.e. the Connaught room, Chairman's Parlour and Members` Room. Members requiring access to any other secure areas within the Town Hall and other office accommodation sites would then need to report to reception desks in the same way as other visitors to gain access to Officers. In order to achieve this additional security would be required to the first floor access to Housing Services; this would be at an approximate cost of £3,000.00.

OPTION 2

To use the existing system and completely remove Members access from the door entry system so

that entry to secure areas would be denied. Members requiring access to secure areas would then need to report to reception desks in the same way as other visitors to gain access to our offices, and would only be available during normal working hours. This option can again be implemented at no cost and within a short timescale.

OPTION 3

To provide a higher level of security to further restrict access within the Town Hall by adding additional control units and swipe readers to any existing doors or new areas identified. There would be a cost associated with this option. The current system can be upgraded in either two or four door modules. The budget cost of a two door installation would be approx £3,000. There may also be costs associated with providing additional security doors at strategic points within the building to further limit access within secure areas.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

There are none.

APPENDICES

None.