Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	The provision of IT equipment to Members
Date:	Friday, 17 June, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext. 6314)
Contact Officer:	Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer (ext. 6316)

1	**Relevant Background Information**
1.1	The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 15 April, agreed, after considering a recommendation which promoted the standardisation of the IT equipment provided to Members, to defer the matter until after the election when a Working Group would be set up to consider the relevant issues.

2	**Key Issues**
2.1	Following consideration of the report, which has been enclosed as Appendix 1, the Working Group agreed to recommend the following package to the Committee:

- Desktop PC
- Monitor

  or

- Laptop
- Monitor
- Laptop docking station
- Laptop case
- Laptop lock

  and

- All-in-one printer, scanner and fax machine
- 500GB External hard drive
- Blackberry
  - (as per the decision of the Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee, on 19th September, 2005 this does not include line rental or cost of calls)
- Digital Camera (for those Members who do not require a Blackberry)

	Members will also be provided with print cartridges and memory sticks when required.
2.2	The proposed package not only acknowledges the benefits of the equipment which is currently provided to Members but also considers best practice research. As a result of this research and when considering how the Council's methods of communication have evolved and improved, the Working Group has included a Blackberry as part of its recommendation.
2.3	The Blackberry will not only permit Members to communicate verbally, by text and by email but it will also provide access to the internet as well as prove to be an effective tool in harnessing social media, a communication technique which is changing the way messages are relayed to many of the city's key stakeholders through interactive dialogue.
2.4	Furthermore, in keeping with the initial report considered by the Committee in April, the Working Group agreed to recommend that the equipment should be provided on a rolling four year programme which means that the it will not be renewed until after the four year period.
2.5	As per the decision of the Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee, on 14 March, 2005, the Working Group also recommends a continuation of the policy whereby Members are given the option to purchase the IT equipment which had been loaned to them and that the cost would be based on the age and quality of the computer equipment. If IT equipment is purchased, all Council supplied licenses, such as Microsoft Office, must be removed.
2.6	It must be made clear that although significant savings can be made through the standardisation of the package being offered these savings will not result in a reduced IT support for Members. Members are assured that the proposed package will not only allow for their roles and responsibilities as a locally elected representative to be carried out effectively but that it will also permit Members to harness new, evolving and increasingly important methods of communication.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The total cost to the Council to provide the above IT package would be approximately £13,000 per year which would result in an annual saving of £12,000 per year.
3.2	As a result of the standardisation of the IT estate further efficiencies would be realised as a result of a decrease in the amount of resources required to support the diverse estate which exists presently.

4	Equality Implications
4.1	N/A

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that the Committee agrees to:
5.2	• the provision of the above package to all Members on a rolling four year programme, and

5.3	• reaffirm the decision of the Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee of 14 March, 2005 whereby Members are given the option to purchase the loaned equipment at a cost which would be based on its age and quality.

6	**Decision Tracking**

Officers responsible:

    Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer

June 2011

7	**Key to Abbreviations**

N/A

8	**Documents Attached**

Appendix 1:   Report considered by the 'Provision of IT Equipment Working Group' on Wednesday, 18 June, 2011