

# Briefing Notes

## Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 May 2011

Mark Sheldon, Director of resources

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the officer indicated.

There has been media interest in the use of mobile telephony and the costs associated with the use of such equipment and we have also received a freedom of information request about the matter. The requestor did suggest that Members may be interested in the information.

At the recent chair's briefing it was agreed that the committee should receive a briefing note and then they can decide if they wish to receive a more detailed report at a later date.

The council has 257 mobile phones, of which 28 are BlackBerry smartphones. The current contract is with Vodafone, and all contracts are on a 24 month basis with 12 months warranty. The costs are approximately £6400 per quarter.

The use of mobile phone technology, including BlackBerry smartphones, has many benefits. Employees use these devices for a variety of reasons for example, because they are lone workers, work out of hours or work away from their desks. Generally they assist staff to be in contact with other staff or support visiting clients.

The council's mobile phone contract provides free mobile to mobile calls between anyone on the same service provider, which helps keep the council's overall telephony costs down. There has been no capital cost for BlackBerry devices as the council was able to take advantage of the credit scheme offered by our mobile service provider.

A BlackBerry enables an officer to work flexibly, often out of hours to keep up to date with their emails and diaries which can be accessed using the devices. This allows them to deal with issues or problems without having to return to the offices, avoiding further cost and delay. Many employees manage the increasing volume of e-mails in their own time, at no cost to the council.

Employees have the facility to 'tag' any calls which are made for personal use although most staff these days carry their own mobile phones for personal use.