

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Environment Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	6th February 2025 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Ruth Burgess – Streetscape Development Manager		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	14 Update - Paperless Council Meetings		
Background	<p>In July 2024 at the Environment Committee Meeting it was approved that the committee would be paperless, following the successful trial of paperless meetings of this committee we would now like too seek the necessary commitment from full Council to achieve paperless meetings for the following committee meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Hall and Assets Committee • Planning Committee <p>And similarly to any Congleton Town Council Working Groups by embracing the current technology available to councillors, volunteers and officers in order to meet our environmental commitments .</p>		
Update	<p>Why does this report require a council decision?</p> <p>The changes to the way in which councillors receive committee papers affects all Members of the Council.</p> <p>In common with other councils, Congleton faces a number of significant challenges over the next few years particularly in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting our corporate responsibilities in addressing the climate emergency and the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral, - finding sufficient resources to continue to provide services that meet the needs of our residents <p>Reducing paper consumption will mitigate (reduce) the impacts of climate change by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lowering the greenhouse gas emissions generated by processing pulp into paper. - using less paper individually will reduce the amount of paper being transported overall, thereby reducing carbon emissions. - reducing the amount of waste lessening the amount of material sent to landfills. - <p>Why is this being recommended?</p> <p>To deliver on the Council’s commitments to secure ongoing savings in its revenue budget and to assist in achieving the Council’s corporate aspirations to reduce its carbon footprint, whilst still complying with legislation requiring the provision of copy agendas for inspection by the public.</p>		

	<p>Options considered:</p> <p>Option 1</p> <p>To adopt a paperless approach to further committee meetings and working groups involving both councillors and officers. As part of this, officers will continue to support councillors in the understanding and operation of any electronic devices provided. We will continue to comply with statutory requirements to make available a reasonable number of copies of an agenda at any meeting to which the public are entitled to attend.</p> <p>Option 2</p> <p>To make no change to our current arrangements for other committees.</p> <p>Conclusion.</p> <p>In conclusion, a number of councils have completed a transition to paperless meetings over the past three or four years and there is a clear direction of travel in this regard, such that over the course of the next few years it is expected to become standard practice in local government. This Council is now at the point at which it can begin a transformation to radically reduce our reliance on, and use of, paper. This will not only save the Council a considerable amount of money each year, but also assist in reducing our carbon footprint and set an example to others.</p>
Proposal	To seek approval for further committees and working groups to undertake 'paperless' meetings.
Environmental	Removal of paper documents will reduce the Council's carbon footprint.
Equality	<p>Tablets or laptop should improve accessibility for many, due to the ease of zooming in on particular text relative to paper documents. Use of a screen-reader software should be possible on any equipment we select so that those with significant visual impairment can access the content.</p> <p>Spare tablets/laptops should be available so that public attendees can access the content. The tablets must be sufficiently easy to use that training is not required and even those with limited digital confidence or tablet experience can easily access the content.</p> <p>Another project is developing a new website for CTC and this must also meet the latest accessibility standards to enable this work to succeed.</p>
Financial	None.
Decision Requested	Option 1 Option 2