

Report Title	A Digital Approach for Elected Members
Meeting	Executive
Meeting Date	27 August 2026
Report Author	Sarah Astin-Wood
Directorate	Chief Executive's
Lead Executive Member(s)	Cllr Mohammed Ammer
Wards Affected	All
Public. Part Exempt, or Fully Exempt	Public
Appendices (if any)	Appendix 1 – Financial Implications

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to introduce a digital by default, paperless approach to Council, Executive, Committee and Working Group meeting papers for Elected Members, supported by Council-issued devices, appropriate information governance controls and a phased implementation programme.
- 1.2 With the withdrawal of printed papers, the proposal will reduce avoidable printing, postage and staff administration time, improve access to current and historical meeting papers, support more efficient democratic processes, and strengthen readiness for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) by adopting consistent digital working practices.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, Executive is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the introduction of digital by default meeting papers for Elected Members as soon as possible, subject to procurement, budget confirmation and Member support arrangements being in place.
- 2.2 Agree that Council and Committee papers will be issued electronically by default, with printed papers provided only by exception where required for accessibility, reasonable adjustment or statutory/public access requirements.
- 2.3 Approve the provision of suitable Council-managed devices for Elected Members, supported by appropriate mobile device management, security controls, asset registration, acceptable use requirements and Information Security/Information Governance compliance.

Delegate final implementation arrangements, including device specification, support model, disclaimer wording and go-live date, to the Chief Executive.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

Background

- 3.1 Digital transformation is integral to our Council Plan (priority 1: Providing High Quality Services and Facilities) and our Customer and Digital Strategy 2025-28.
- 3.2 Digitising practices for staff, customers and Members alike is key to modernising local government and improving our service efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3.3 Digital transformation for Members has been under consideration for some time, with a digital trial for ten volunteer Members planned at the start of the year but delayed due to several factors, including completion of the Information Security policies and the election.

4. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

- 4.1 The proposal will support LGR readiness by embedding consistent digital working practices for Members ahead of future structural change.
- 4.2 Digital access to meeting papers will reduce reliance on physical document movement, support Members who may be elected to the new Unitary Council where it is likely that digital delivery of democratic services will be the expected approach, improve resilience where meeting locations change, and provide a stronger digital foundation for future governance arrangements.
- 4.3 Other Councils in the Pennine area (who will form part of the new unitary authority) are already digitally enabled, with Councillors having work devices. Pendle moving in this direction will bring us in line with them in readiness for LGR.

5. Cost Savings

- 5.1 Expected savings and efficiencies include reduced paper consumption, printing, copying, postage, print room time and Democratic Services collation time (currently around 2 hours per week which could be used more efficiently). See Appendix 1 for costings and savings.
- 5.2 Whilst there will be an initial cost to procure devices/cases, this standard offer allows for cost savings through bulk-buying and provides an invest to save model, with ongoing revenue savings each year (Appendix 1).

6. Efficient Practice

- 6.1 The Council currently produces significant volumes of printed agenda packs, reports and appendices for formal democratic meetings. A digital by default approach would enable Members to access papers securely through existing committee management arrangements and Council systems, reduce duplication, improve access to current and historical papers, and make late papers, updates and replacement documents available more quickly.
- 6.2 Digital meeting papers will support more efficient practices by reducing manual collation, copying, reprinting and distribution. Officers will be able to focus on quality assurance, timely publication and Member support rather than producing large paper packs. Members will be able to search documents, bookmark key sections, download papers in advance and access meeting information consistently wherever they are working.

7. Practicalities

- 7.1 The recommended model is to provide each elected Member with a Council-managed iPad, protective case, charger and the required applications to read, search, download and annotate meeting papers. These will be accessed via the current website pages, with any confidential items being emailed separately (as is the case now). This brings consistency and functionality to Member practice and recognises that investing in a system such as Modern.Gov is not currently viable at this stage, not least given LGR.
- 7.2 Before receiving a device, each Member will be required to sign a Device and information governance acknowledgement confirming that the device remains Council property, is recorded on the asset register, must be used in accordance with Council Information Security, Information Governance, Data Protection, ICT Acceptable Use and Member Code of Conduct requirements, and must be returned when requested or when the Member leaves office (see Appendix 2 for a proposed version).
- 7.3 Where WiFi is unavailable or unreliable at a meeting venue, agenda packs can be downloaded to the device in advance for offline access. Each Member is in control of their meeting papers on their own device.
- 7.4 IT and Democratic Services will provide practical support to Members while digital access is new, including guidance on handover of devices, drop-in sessions, one-to-one assistance where needed, short user guides and a clear route for reporting issues. Members who prefer to work from paper may print papers themselves (using their own facilities) where they consider this necessary, subject to the same confidentiality and data protection responsibilities.

8. Timeline

- 8.1 A phased approach is recommended, with an approximate timeline as follows:
- September 2026: confirm requirements, costs, procurement route and governance documentation

- September 2026: procure and configure devices
- October 2026: pilot with Executive and one scrutiny or committee meeting cycle
- November to December 2026: review pilot feedback and refine support
January 2027: roll out to all Members
- February 2027 onwards: embed digital by default arrangements and report benefits achieved.

9. Summary

- 9.1 If adopted, the proposal will modernise democratic administration, reduce avoidable cost and environmental impact, improve Member access to information, and provide a stronger digital foundation for future local government arrangements.

10. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (Providing High Quality Services and Facilities, Proud and Connected Communities and Places, Good Growth and Housing and Healthy Communities)

The proposal supports the Council Plan priority of Providing High Quality Services and Facilities by improving the efficiency, resilience and accessibility of democratic administration. It supports Proud and Connected Communities and Places by enabling Members to access information more quickly and respond to constituents more effectively. It also contributes to Healthy Communities and climate objectives by reducing unnecessary paper use and printing of agenda packs.

11. Implications

11.1 Financial Implications

See Appendix 1.

11.2 Legal and Governance Implications

There is no legal requirement for the Council to provide Councillors with printed agendas and reports (bar matters of accessibility). Legislation in this respect is technology neutral and does not prescribe that they must be in paper form.

Other legal and governance implications include ensuring continued compliance with access to information requirements, publication rules, exempt/confidential information handling, data protection, information security and reasonable adjustment duties. Members will sign a device and information governance acknowledgement before receiving equipment (Appendix 2).

11.3 **Climate and Biodiversity Implications**

The proposal is expected to have a positive climate and biodiversity impact by reducing paper consumption, printing, toner use, storage, courier movement and waste. There will be an environmental impact from device manufacture and disposal, which should be mitigated through appropriate procurement standards, reuse where possible, secure recycling and a sensible device lifecycle. This supports the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 and the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

11.4 **Human Resources Implications**

The change will affect working practices in Democratic Services, ICT and the print room. Staff time currently spent printing, collating, amending and distributing papers should reduce over time, with some capacity redirected to Member support, digital publication quality and benefits monitoring during implementation.

11.5 **Equality and Diversity Implications**

An Equality Screening has been completed.

12. **Consultation**

- 12.1 Consultation will include elected Members, Democratic Services, IT, Finance, Legal, Information Governance, the Section 151 Officer and relevant staff involved in printing and distributing committee papers. Member engagement will test practical issues such as device preference, accessibility needs, training requirements and WiFi coverage.

13. **Alternative Options Considered**

Option 1: Do nothing and continue routine printed packs. This is not recommended because it maintains avoidable cost, paper use, manual administration and reliance on physical document distribution.

Option 2: Introduce a paper-light approach only, with electronic papers encouraged but paper packs still routinely available. This may help transition but is unlikely to deliver the full savings and cultural change required.

Option 3: Adopt digital by default meeting papers with a structured support programme. This is the recommended option because it balances efficiency, inclusion, governance and deliverability and supports Members transition into the new authority.

14. **Statutory Officer Sign off** (please put an x in the relevant box below)

Section 151 Officer	X
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Monitoring Officer	X
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15. Background Documents

Pendle Borough Council's Customer and Digital Strategy 2025 – 28
Pendle Borough Council's ICT, Information Security/Governance, Data Protection
and Acceptable Use policies
[Councillor introduction to...digital political leadership | Local Government Association](#)

Contact Officers

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Appendix 1 – Costings and Savings

One-off Purchase Costs	Apple iPad
27 x Tablet Units	£9,383
27 x Keyboard Cases	£5,411
<i>NB: these tablets are Wi-Fi only.</i>	
TOTAL Cost	£14,794

Ongoing Revenue Savings	Per Annum
Printing Costs	£3,000
Postage Charges	£3,150
TOTAL Saving	£6,150

The initial outlay would be 'paid-back' in savings between 2 and 3 years
 Some devices have already been procured for the previously planned trial.
 Remaining number required is 27.

The costs provide above are based on current price quotes, these can fluctuate with pricing trends.

Appendix 2

Councillor Device User Agreement *(proposed)*

Information Governance, Data Protection and Acceptable Use Requirements

This agreement sets out the conditions for the use of any device issued by the Council to support an elected Member in carrying out Council duties.

By accepting and using a Council-issued device, I acknowledge and agree that:

- I will comply with all Council Information Governance, Information Security, Data Protection, Acceptable Use, Member Code of Conduct and related policies, procedures and guidance.
- I will complete all mandatory Information Governance, Data Protection and Cyber Security training required by the Council and maintain my knowledge through any refresher training provided.
- I will protect Council information and personal data from unauthorised access, disclosure, loss, theft or misuse and will report any suspected data breach or security incident immediately.
- I will use the device primarily for legitimate Council business and activities directly related to my role as a Borough Councillor.
- I will not use the device for party-political campaigning, political party administration, electioneering, canvassing, fundraising, or any activity undertaken on behalf of a political party or political group.
- I will not share my account credentials or permit unauthorised access to the device or Council systems.
- I understand that Council information stored, processed or accessed on the device remains subject to legal and regulatory requirements, including the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other applicable legislation.
- I understand that failure to comply with these requirements may result in the withdrawal of access to Council systems and, where appropriate, referral through the Council's standards, governance or information security processes.
- The device remains Council property, as recorded on the asset register and must be returned when requested or when the Member leaves office.

Declaration

I confirm that I have read, understood and agree to comply with the requirements set out in this Councillor Device User Agreement.

Councillor Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Ward: _____