

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

COUNTY COUNCIL – 21st January 2015

REPORT AUTHOR: Head of Democratic Services

SUBJECT: Webcasting

 REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary.

- 1.1 This report sets out the factual basis upon which cabinet can decide the future of webcasting of meetings by the County Council and requests that funding is allocated in the 2015/16 Revenue Budget and onwards to support the webcasting of meetings.

2. Introduction.

- 2.1 The County Council at its meeting on 22nd October, 2014 requested that the Democratic Services Committee reports back to the Council with costed options for a minimum, maximum and intermediate level of webcasting. This report was considered by the Cabinet on 16th December, 2014.

3. Webcasting Options.

- 3.1 The Minimum, Maximum and Intermediate levels of webcasting requested by the Council are suggested as set out below:

Minimum Option.

	Number of meetings per year.
Full Council	2
Cabinet	2
Planning	2
Scrutiny	1
Total	7

These numbers of meetings are based on an average number of webcasts undertaken by each of these committees during the pilot.

Intermediate Option.

	Number of meetings per year.
Full Council	4
Cabinet	8
Planning	11
Scrutiny	4
Total	27

These number of meetings are the mid range figures between the minimum and maximum options.

Maximum Option.

	Number of meetings per year.
Full Council	7
Cabinet	17
Planning	24
Scrutiny	8
Total	56

These number of meetings are based on the total number of meetings for each of these bodies as set out in the 2015 diary (January to December).

4. Support for Webcasting and Cost of Webcasting Meetings.

- 4.1 The focus of attention to date has been on the provision of the equipment to replace the Council's congress system at County Hall and also to provide the hardware which will enable the Council to undertake webcasting.
- 4.2 However the Officer Working Group responsible for the project has been clear from the beginning that the issue of support for the equipment installed was a concern as there is currently no revenue budget to provide that support.
- 4.3 The Council is coming to the end of a webcasting pilot project which started in March 2012 and will end by the end of March 2015 which was funded by a one-off grant from Welsh Government of £40,000. Support for webcasting during the pilot project was provided by Public-I with the company providing the cameras, technical support and hosting facility for the broadcast. In addition an officer from Democratic Services supported the technician during the meeting and ICT Services ensured that the connectivity to the Council's systems remained intact during the meeting. The Council negotiated a preferential price with Public-I for the number of webcasts to be undertaken during the pilot of £2000 per meeting. There is a small amount of that grant funding available which will need to be used by April 2015.
- 4.4 **Option 1** - The costs to the Council for using Public-I to provide webcasting in the same way as was provided during the pilot based upon the 3 options outlined in 3.1 above was set out in the report considered by the Cabinet on 16th December, 2014.
- 4.5 **Option 2** - In addition the Council has been advised by Public-I that in the long term its preferred business model as a company would be not to support the Council in the same way as it has during the pilot project (i.e. providing a technician and all the equipment), but that the Council undertakes the webcasting of meetings using its own staff and equipment with support and electronic hosting provided by Public-I (" the Support Model") . The Council for comparative purposes only, has asked Public-I to provide indicative costs for a defined number of options for presentation to Members in this report which were set out in the report considered by the Cabinet on 16th December, 2014. Essentially, the cost of Option 2 would range from £35,740 to £ 40,522 pa depending on whether the minimim, medium or maximum option was chosen. However Members are asked to note that pursuing the Support model

described above would require a formal tender process with other suppliers being able to tender for the work.

- 4.6 The Support Model option will mean that the Council (if adopted) would require the Council to provide its own technical resource to undertake the webcasting of meetings at a cost as set out in **Appendix 1** which will need to be added to the costs described in 4.5 above. With the current staffing resources in Democratic and Scrutiny Services and the roles already undertaken both in meetings of the Council and in supporting webcasting, there is no capacity for the Council to use this team to provide the technical aspects required in webcasting meetings.
- 4.7 If the Council were to fund a technician post to undertake this work, this would bring with it a number of additional benefits such as:
- (a) A technician located in the Electrical and Mechanical Section could undertake responsibility for a number of other systems in County Hall such as heating and lighting in the Chamber etc, in addition to supporting webcasting.
 - (b) The technician would be responsible for ensuring that the Committee Rooms (equipment, heating, lighting) in County Hall were set up prior to meetings taking place which currently does not happen.
 - (c) The technician could take responsibility for other non County Hall systems such as the mobile congress system based at Neuadd Maldwyn.
 - (d) The technician would be responsible for undertaking the webcasting of Council meetings at County Hall.
 - (e) The technician can provide dedicated support to the Chair and the Committee during meetings in the use of the congress system.
 - (f) Having a technician means that the Council has the flexibility to consider other options for the delivery of webcasting without using an external provider, and the Council can be more flexible in the number of meetings recorded and webcasts undertaken which can be amended without incurring any additional costs unless the 100 hours airtime licence is exceeded.
- 4.8 It is suggested that a technician post should be positioned at a Grade 4 post at a cost of £22,440 per annum (at the current salary level). A part of that cost, £12,000, can be identified from an existing Corporate Property revenue budget meaning that the Council would only have to find the additional £10,440 for the post. The potential also exists for this post to be suitable for a current member of staff seeking redeployment.
- 4.9 **Option 3** - The Council could deliver webcasting itself without using an outside provider. The cost of the licence for the Council to undertake webcasting has already been included in the capital cost for the purchase of the new congress system which has been agreed by the Cabinet. There is an additional cost of £2000 per annum air time per year, which allows the Council 12 months or 100 hours of recorded meetings to be saved, with the webcasts delivered onto the internet using Bosch off line servers as the storage / transmission mechanism. The total cost of this option would be £22,440 (technician post) together with £2,000 (12 months / 100 hours airtime licence) i.e. a total of £24,440 per annum.

4.10 **Option 4** - The Council could of course decide not to undertake any webcasts of meetings. However this could give rise to a number of potential issues:

- (a) Welsh Government in the White Paper “Devolution, Democracy and Delivery – Improving Public Services for People in Wales” states that it is Welsh Government’s intention to make the webcasting of meetings mandatory. However to date there is no clarity as to at what level this compulsion to undertake webcasting would be set, despite requests to Welsh Government officials.
- (b) The webcasting of meetings particularly Planning Committee and Council meetings discussing windfarms has enabled the Council both to deliver the democratic process visually to a large number of the public, and has greatly assisted in the management of these meetings by allowing the Council to control the numbers of the public attending. The Council has a well tested process for such meetings now in place.
- (c) The public is appreciative of webcasts undertaken by the Council in view of some of the positive comments received.
- (d) The numbers of people viewing webcasts has been significant – 30267 live and archived views for 18 events as at October, 2014.
- (e) At a time of severe austerity, this is a very simple and effective way for the Council to show the public the difficult discussions that Members are having to face in coming to difficult decisions relating to services as the public can see the debate live.

5. Costs Breakdown

	Option 1 pa	Option 2 pa	Option 3 pa	Option 4 pa
Minimum	£14,000	£36,164- £35,740	£24,420 (£12,440 additional budget required)	Nil
Medium	£54,000	£37,908 – £37,420	£24,420 (£12,440 additional budget required)	Nil
Maximum	£112,000	£39,940 – £40,522	£24,420 (£12,440 additional budget required)	Nil

6. Proposal

The Cabinet at its meeting on 16th December, 2014 recommended to the Democratic Services Committee and Full Council that the Council should undertake the maximum level of webcasting of meetings.

The Cabinet also decided:

- (i) that the Council undertakes the webcasting of meetings itself without the need for using an external provider.
- (ii) that the additional revenue commitment of £12,440 per annum (technician and airtime licence) be included in the draft budget proposals to be recommended to the Council in February, 2015.

7. Powys Change Plan

Financially balanced and fit for purpose public services:

- extending the scope of Digital Powys to provide enabling technology (citizens able to use technology to access services)
- maximising efficiency – Customer Services – electronic self service systems so that the public can serve themselves.

One Powys Plan – Guiding Principles:

Communications and Engagement.

- Improve communications with the public;
- Promote Awareness of key policy decisions that will affect future service delivery;
- Adapt communication activities to take advantage of emerging technologies and communicate in ways preferred by the public.

8. Options Considered/Available

The options available to the Council are as follows:

- (i) Contract with Public-I to provide the full service package as currently (Appendix 1);
- (ii) Contract with Public-I to provide the reduced service package of hosting and support with the Council resourcing the webcasting of meetings itself (Appendices 2 and 3);
- (iii) The Council undertaking the full resourcing of webcasting of meetings itself (Appendix 3);
- (iv) Not undertaking webcasting.

9. Preferred Choice and Reasons

The preferred option is option (iii) which will deliver webcasting at the lowest cost possible as well as providing additional benefits in relation to systems support and flexibility for the Council in delivering webcasting.

10. Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

The provision of webcasting by the Council provides the public with easy access to meetings of the Council at a time convenient to them, either viewing the live event or an archived version. It also means that the public will not have to travel to attend meetings at County Hall thus reducing car usage. With reference to meetings where larger numbers of the public could be attending to hear controversial issues such as windfarm debates, the webcasting of meetings has led to a reduction in the numbers of the public attending and consequentially a reduced opportunity for public order issues relating to that matter. The new congress system and webcasting facilities means that the Council is able to provide a translation service at those meetings in

County Hall with both languages (English and Welsh) being able to be streamed to the public as part of the webcast.

11. Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Not applicable.

12. Local Member(s)

All Members

13. Other Front Line Services

Not applicable.

14. Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

Legal – The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view

Finance - The additional revenue commitment of £12,440 per annum will need to be included in the draft budget proposal to be recommended to Council in February, 2015.

Property – The Senior Manager Regeneration and Corporate Property comments that the creation of a Technician post would bring benefits to Members and core democratic business within County Hall and allow a degree of flexibility around the provision of webcasting.

HR – No response received.

ICT - No specific issues for ICT, but ICT will need to be advised of all future webcasts to ensure that support is available should this become necessary in relation to network connectivity.

15. Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

Not Applicable.

16. Corporate Communications

Communications Comment: The report is of public and service user interest and requires proactive communication action, including use of news release and social media.

17. Statutory Officers

The solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: “ I support the recommendations”.

The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance and that funding will need to be found within the 2015/16 budget through additional savings.

18. Members' Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

19. Democratic Services Committee

The Democratic Services Committee considered the report at its meeting on 15th January, 2015 and its recommendation is set out below.

Recommendation to the County Council:	Reason for Recommendation:
That the Council should undertake the maximum level of webcasting of meetings.	To allow the Council to conduct efficient business and communicate with its residents.

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y / N	Within Budget:	Y / N

Relevant Local Member(s):	N/A
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	S Jowett, W Richards, S Boyd,
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	2015/16 financial year

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Background Papers used to prepare Report:

CABINET REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION 3