

**Report To:** Democratic Services Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 14 November 2013

**Lead Officer:** Gary Williams, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**Report Author:** Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager

**Title:** An Update on Webcasting Arrangements

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**1. What is the report about?**

This report provides an updated position statement on the progress towards the webcasting of certain meetings in 2014.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

Council gave its consent for arrangements to be made to undertake webcasting and an invitation to tender for the contract to host and support webcasting has now been issued. It is therefore an opportune time for the Democratic Services Committee to consider the progress made and the issues ahead.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Democratic Services Committee considers and comments on the arrangements and progress in respect of the webcasting of meetings in 2014.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 The former Minister for Communications and Local Government wrote to all authorities earlier this year indicating that the Welsh Government was making £1.2 million available by way of grants to local authorities in order to assist them in, amongst other things, implementing the webcasting of council meetings.
- 4.2 Each local authority was able to accept a grant of £40k towards the cost of introducing webcasting and 'remote attendance' at meetings. Whilst webcasting is generally viewed as a viable and attractive facility, numerous technical and administrative problems have been identified relating to remote attendance. It should be noted that the Welsh Government has not committed itself to repeating the grant funding in future years.
- 4.3 The webcasting of meetings involves the live streaming of sound and images of meetings. The webcast can also be made available on the Council's website as archived material. This means that members of the public who are not able to attend meetings may either view them live online or at a later time

or date via the online archive. Viewers using the archived content have the advantage of being able to use timeline links allowing them to view content by item or speaker.

- 4.4 The merits of webcasting were considered by the Corporate Executive Team (CET) in March 2013 where it was agreed that full Council be asked to decide on whether to webcast certain meetings. A demonstration of webcasting was held for members on 15<sup>th</sup> May and in July 2013, Council gave its consent, subject to successful testing prior to the first public broadcasts.
- 4.5 Denbighshire has since developed and issued its webcasting specifications to allow webcasting suppliers to tender for a contract. The specifications are based on the following headings:
- Hosting of content
  - System management, security and performance
  - Compatibility with existing cameras technology and software systems
  - Training and support
  - Innovation / social networks
  - Dual language – Welsh and English
  - Project planning, and
  - Pricing
- 4.6 It is anticipated that a public webcasting package will have been procured before the end of 2013, with system implementation, training and testing during the early part of 2014.
- 4.7 The Council intends to webcast approximately 60 hours a year of meetings held in the Council Chamber in County Hall using the Chamber's fixed camera and delegate technology. Because of this, meetings of full Council and the Planning Committee, which meet in the Chamber, are expected to be the ones being webcast.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

The issues covered in this report are not statutory requirements but the intentions behind them would be appropriate for the Council's priority area *Modernising The Council To Deliver Efficiencies And Improve Services For Our Customers*.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Previous cost estimates based on a leading supplier have assumed that a 1 year contract would cost in the region of £21k with a 10% discount for taking a two year contract (approximately £32k for two years). The actual price will be confirmed following the receipt of tenders and any contract offer by the Council.

The introduction and operation of webcasting arrangements will result in additional officer time being assigned to the meetings that are webcast. The

actual impact of this is not certain yet, but it is expected that the webcasting arrangements will be delivered within existing resources. There could be some resource implications for the ICT service though the external supplier will be expected to provide support as part of the contract.

**7. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others, and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?**

A demonstration on webcasting was made to members in May 2013 and full Council agreed to the webcasting of meetings in July 2013. CET has also been consulted on the proposals.

Webcasting will enable wider access through the internet to Council meetings and may offer interesting and popular new ways of engaging the public, for example, through the use of social media connected to webcasts. No other equality implications have been identified as a result of this report.

**8. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not obtained for this report.

**9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

New, additional activities such as the webcasting of meetings using only existing resources have been identified by the Service as a risk. The risk is related to the capacity available to support to an acceptable standard both webcasting and other essential and statutory democratic and committee services.

**10. Power to make the Decision**

Section 111 Local Government Act 1972.