

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES

WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Reason for the Report

1. To agree a Webcasting Protocol and any consequential amendments to the Constitution to allow webcasting at committee meetings.

Background

2. The Council has been webcasting full council meetings at City Hall and County Hall since 2008. A webcast is a transmission of audio and video over the Internet, rather like a television programme, enabling the public to watch meetings from any location with internet access in real time. Council webcasting has proved successful with significant numbers of viewers especially in relation to council budget meetings and key debates of public significance.
3. The maximum live audience to date was for the council meeting on the 26 March 2015 [Notice of Motion re Somali Land] with 3,098 hits. The previous highest was for the council meeting on 26th June 2014 with 2,106. In 2014/15 the total annual live webcast views for 2014/15 was 10, 267 and the total number of archived webcast views was 23,360.
4. Rule 30 of the Council Meeting Procedure Rules permits the official webcasting of council meetings but does not permit any other person to record full council meetings. The situation is different in England where recent legislation require third party filming and recording of council meetings to be permitted. Rule 18 of the Committee Meeting Procedure Rules allows a council committee to expressly authorise the official recording of committee meetings.
5. There are identifiable benefits that can be achieved from the broadcasting of public meetings. These include:
 - More open and transparent governance and accountability
 - Improved public engagement in and understanding of decision making.

- Easier public access to meetings minimising travel and allowing more flexible viewing times.
 - Enables the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requirement for engaging public in Scrutiny
 - Incentive for high standards of member attendance, engagement and conduct at meetings
 - Effective means of communicating to the public, officers and other members information and decisions.
 - Archived meetings provide important records alongside approved minutes.
 - Can be used with social media to further promote public engagement. This is possible through a social media conversation which can run alongside the meeting when it is in progress.
 - The public can access the papers and presentations made at the meeting as well as see the meeting footage.
 - Provides a true record of the meeting. This helps to supplement minutes and to counteract any misleading use of “edited highlights” by anyone filming the meeting.
6. The initial cost of installation and the early provision of webcasting were met from a Welsh Government grant. (WG) in 2012/13. Since then the council has agreed an annual contract for webcasting at City and County Hall for up to 60 hours. This includes :
- Near real time or live-streaming of all formal meetings of Council.
 - archiving facilities for webcast material for up to 4 years
 - detailed statistics in respect of the viewing of webcast material
 - minimal officer time to set up and publish broadcasts
 - minimal use of additional hardware/software to facilitate broadcasts
 - integration of meeting information documents (agenda and reports etc.) with
The webcast
 - optimising the available viewing experience for the public

Webcasting Committee meetings

7. It has recently been agreed that by moving from the annual to a three year contract; the supplier will at a nominal extra cost provide an additional 60 hours webcasting each year and install suitable cameras in a third meeting room. This will provide additional opportunities to webcast other committee meetings of public interest.
8. In discussion with officers, the Scrutiny and Democratic Services Committee Chairs and Cabinet members; Committee Room 4 has been identified as the best venue especially given the recent relocation of the Planning Committee to meet there earlier this year.
9. It is proposed that webcasting be introduced initially on a trial basis for Planning Committee given the significant public attendance and public interest in these decisions.

Webcasting Protocol and WLGA Guidance

10. The Welsh Local Government Association [WLGA} have produce useful guidance for authorities in using webcasting which is set out at appendix 1 for noting. A draft Protocol is also attached at Appendix 2 to regulate the propose trial at Planning committee.
11. Training for the Planning committee and officers in line with the WLGA Guidance has been arranged for 5 August 2015 in preparation for the forthcoming trial with a view to testing the system and Protocol at the August meeting and going live from September.
12. It is suggested that the trial period commence in September for 6 months with a report back to Constitution committee.
13. Possible income generation from the use of these web casting systems are being explored as part of next year's budget strategy. These include:
 - Using the webcasts for training activities or briefings.
 - enabling local companies and organisations to hire the facilities
 - linking to provide real time welsh translation facilities

Financial Implications

14. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as the budget currently allocated is sufficient to discharge this duty.

In the event of any opportunities arising from the use of these services then the potential impact on expenditure and income budgets needs to be fully understood before proceeding.

Legal Implications

- 15 The WLGA guidance note attached to the report provides a helpful overview on the 'law and protocols relating to webcasting' including issues such as Data protection, freedom of information, copyright and consent. To avoid duplication reference is made to the same. It is, however, important to emphasise that no exempt or confidential agenda items should be broadcast. In the case of exempt items, where the public and press are excluded, the broadcast should be switched off and replaced with a message saying why the broadcast has been temporarily suspended. It is noted that the protocol addresses such matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

- (1) the Committee note the contents of this report and approves the Draft Protocol to govern the forthcoming webcasting for Planning Committee with effect from 1 September 2015 for an in initial trial period of 6 months.

- (2) the Director of Governance and Legal services be authorised to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution to permit Committee webcasting in line with the draft Protocol.

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CC/MR/V0.1

The following appendices are attached:

1. WLGA Guidance on webcasting
2. Draft Protocol I on Webcasting