

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

11 DECEMBER 2013

### REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES

#### WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

##### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- inform Council of an aspiration to introduce webcasting for specific meetings of Council and its committees;
- Seek authorisation for the recording of Council meetings and their subsequent publication to the internet.

##### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1.1 The development of a live webcasting facility will enable greater engagement with the public and meet some of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and assist in the delivery of all Corporate Priorities.

##### 3. Background

3.1 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.

3.2 It has been identified that the following benefits can be achieved from the broadcasting of public meetings. These include:

- Transparent governance and accountability
- Citizen engagement and understanding of the democratic process for example understanding of planning decisions
- 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 officers and other members information and decisions. Archived meetings could also be a useful part of officer induction and training.
- Opportunities for members to learn from peer observation and inform potential candidates about their role to encourage democratic renewal.

- 3.3 The Welsh Government (WG) has expressed its support for public broadcasting of Council and other committee meetings by the provision of a grant of £40,000 to assist all Local Authorities in Wales develop the delivery of webcasting and remote attendance facilities.
- 3.4 Other Local Authorities have introduced webcasting. Details of their webcasts and the number of unique viewings either of the live webcast or as part of an archived record are shown at Appendix 1.
- 3.5 These viewing figures are significantly higher than the number of people attending the public meetings of Council or engaging in the formal decision making processes.
- 3.6 Initial investigations have been undertaken to determine how webcasting, using an external provider could be delivered and the potential cost for the provision of this service. It was estimated that the provision of a full high quality service which included approximately 30 hours of recorded meetings per year would use the majority of the WG funding that had been made available. There was also a concern that once any public broadcasting had been undertaken, there would be an expectation for it to continue. Without additional funding an external provision of webcasting was unlikely to be continued after the initial period.
- 3.7 The provision of an in-house solution has been considered and possible options to take forward webcasting have been developed.

#### **4. Current situation / proposal**

- 4.1 An initial plan has been developed to provide a staged progression towards the webcasting of meetings. The plan identified that recordings of Council meetings could be made and placed on the BCBC website with minimal cost and resource implications. This could then be developed into live webcasting in due course.
- 4.2 The Council Chamber has the benefit of having cameras and an audio visual system that has the capability to record meetings. The recording facility has not been used to date but as part of the plans to develop webcasting within the Authority, the system was used to confirm "proof of concept".
- 4.3 A test recording was made and saved to DVD. This recording was processed by the Communications team and uploaded to the BCBC website. This recording was published to the BCBC website and tested to determine the implications for subsequent recordings.
- 4.4 The published recording had high quality picture and sound reproduction that indicated that the Council Chamber systems could be utilised to record meetings without the need for a technical upgrade.
- 4.5 The proof of concept also identified issues where further work would be required before any recording of Council meetings could be formally introduced. These included the purchase of appropriate software licenses, ensuring the availability of web space and website performance and that appropriate equipment and training was provided to key personnel accordingly.

- 4.6 It is proposed that the recording of Council meetings now be formally developed with the intention to record and publish the Annual Meeting of Council on 14 May 2014 to the BCBC website. As part of the progression towards that target, it is planned that the Holocaust Memorial Day Event being held in the Council Chamber on 24 January 2014 will be recorded and published to the BCBC website by 27 January 2014. This will allow schools and other organisations to view the event online on the official Holocaust Memorial Day.
- 4.7 In conjunction with the recording and publication of meetings, the possible options to further develop this facility will be identified and the practicalities and feasibility of live webcasting will be assessed. The development of live broadcasts will not involve any formal meeting of Council or its committees but specific test broadcasts may be made.
- 4.8 It is proposed that Council receive an update report in April 2014 to provide information regarding the progress made in the publication of meeting recordings to the BCBC website and options for the delivery of a live webcasting facility for the Authority.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 There will be no immediate effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules but as a result of the development of the webcasting of meetings the procedure rules may need to be amended accordingly.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications in respect of this report. However as part of the ongoing development for the recording and publishing of meetings an assessment will be undertaken in respect of the Welsh Language and other equalities requirements needed to progress this matter.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 A small amount of expenditure may be needed to progress the development of the live webcasting. It is anticipated that up to £1000 will be made available from the WG grant to provide software and other equipment as necessary.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 That Council:

- Note the contents of this report and the aspiration to introduce webcasting for specific meetings of Council and its committees;
- Seek authorisation for the recording of Council meetings and their subsequent publication to the internet;
- Note that an update report will be presented to Council in April 2014.

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**18 November 2013**

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## Webcasting Statistics – Cardiff

2013		Total Hits	Live	Archive
Council	31 Jan	2151	416	1735
Council (Budget)	28 Feb (*no live webcast)	2378	0	2378
Council	28 Mar	2192	417	1775
Council	25 Apr	1752	273	1479
Council	23 May	799	64	735
Council	27 Jun	1378	347	1031
Council	25 Jul	1347	353	994
Council	26 Sep	1173	254	919
Council	24 Oct	925	351	574
		<b>14,095</b>	<b>2,475</b>	<b>11,620</b>

2012		Total Hits	Live	Archive
Council	13 Dec	3215	827	2388
Council	22 Nov	2028	422	1606
Council	25 Oct	1189	279	910
Council	27 Sep	1113	0	1113
Council	19 Jul	1333	104	1229
Council	21 Jun	973	53	920
Council	17 May	1012	136	876
Council	22 Mar	822	85	736
Council	23 Feb	713	84	629
Council	26 Jan	583	87	496
		<b>12,981</b>	<b>2,077</b>	<b>10,903</b>

## Webcasting Statistics – Swansea

2013		Total Hits	Live	Archive
Council	21 Oct	2,170	800	1,370
Council	22 Oct	641	42	599
Cabinet	05 Nov	306	88	218
Cabinet	12 Nov	54	10	44
		<b>3,171</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>2,231</b>