

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

30 APRIL 2014

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Council of progress that has been made and to approve the revision of the initial plans to take forward the introduction of webcasting for specific meetings of Council and its committees

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, will 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 Council was advised of initial proposals to develop webcasting on 11 December 2013. At that meeting Council was informed of the intention to progress the

provision of an in-house web broadcasting solution, whilst considering other options.

3.5 Council also approved the recording and broadcasting of meetings and was advised that a further report would be provided regarding possible options to take forward webcasting of formal meetings of the Authority.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 The provision of an effective webcasting solution is considered to be based on the following requirements:

- near real time or live-streaming of formal meetings of Council, Cabinet and their committees
- 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
- optimised the available viewing experience for the public
- optimise the use of the Welsh Government grant but minimise additional cost implications
- meet the needs of the Council

4.2 A following options for the webcasting of formal meetings of Council have been considered

- Option 1 - Recording meetings to DVD and uploading the video file to a video sharing website which will be hyperlinked from the BCBC website.
- Option 2 - The provision of a webcasting service from a bespoke provider.
- Option 3 - Optimising the existing Council Chamber systems to provide an internally managed and “as required” webcasting service

4.3 It should be noted that a number of Councils in Wales have already introduced webcasting. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has supported these Councils with the provision of webcasting training for elected members to ensure that the lessons learned from previously webcast meetings can be passed to other Councils before they make a live broadcast.

4.4 The initial webcasting plan proposed that the Annual Meeting of Council be recorded and placed on the BCBC website using the in-house recording option. However, it is now intended to trial the enhanced Council Chamber systems and use the recording as a training aid which will only be available on the Member Zone.

4.5 This training webcast of the Annual meeting of Council will be used to supplement webcasting training for Elected Members which is being provided by the WLGA in June 2014. Chairpersons will also be provided with additional training to assist

them meets the requirements of webcast viewer and explain in more detail about the meeting procedures that will be taking place. This will then complete the preparations to enable a live public broadcast of the Council meeting in July 2014.

- 4.6 Following a successful broadcast in July it is proposed that other meetings be considered for broadcast in 2014-15 financial year. It is hoped that these will include Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and the Development Control Committee. The training session will assist in identifying those meetings which would provide the greatest benefit from being webcast
- 4.7 In subsequent years the level of webcasting could be increased subject to the availability of funding. The statistics provided by the implemented system would identify which webcasts the public considers the most beneficial with the number of those types of meetings being increased accordingly.
- 4.8 The cost of implementing a webcasting system in the Committee Rooms would significantly increase costs which would be unsustainable. It is therefore assumed that any and all webcasting of meetings will take place in the Council Chamber. Council, Development Control Committee and some of the Scrutiny Committees currently have meetings in the Council Chamber. It is considered that the potential benefits of webcasting outweigh the minor inconvenience of holding these committee and other meetings in the Council Chamber.
- 4.9 Other Local Authorities that already have webcasting facilities are looking at alternative options and possible income generation from the use of these systems. These include:
- using the webcasts for training activities or briefings.
 - enabling local companies and organisations to hire the facilities
 - linking local authorities system sites to provide real time translation facilities

Alternative uses for the webcasting system will be considered particularly those that benefit the local communities and organisations and enhance the sustainability of webcasting.

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 Council has allocated a small amount of expenditure to progress the development of the live webcasting (£1000) which will be made available from the WG grant to provide software and other equipment as necessary. Further use of the available grant will be considered as the options are considered and assessed.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That Council note the contents of this report and approves the revision of the initial plans for the introduction for the webcasting for specific meetings of Council and its committees.

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18 April 2014

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