

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET

29 NOVEMBER 2016

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

#### COUNCIL SUITE INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE

##### 1. Purpose of Report.

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- a) seek a waiver under Rule 3.2.3 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules from the requirement to obtain quotes or tenders by open competition for the supply of equipment which will enable the enhancement of the existing Council Chamber infrastructure.
- b) seek approval to enter into a contract with Auditel Rental and Services Limited.

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

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of all the Corporate Priorities by enabling the effective use of the technology for public meetings of Council and other committees.

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the County a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the County.
2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

##### 3. Background.

3.1 Following a competitive tender for the refurbishment of the Council Chamber in 2006 a number of systems were installed to modernise the facilities and provide compliance with the then Disability Discrimination Act. The systems included the microphones, cameras, display systems and electronic voting. When the work was completed Bridgend was considered as having one of the most modern and effective Council Chambers in Wales.

3.2 The development of ICT and audio visual systems has progressed significantly since the initial installation and in October 2014 Cabinet approved the upgrading of the systems in preparation for the implementation of webcasting.

- 3.3 The webcasting system using the Council Chamber's systems has enabled greater openness and transparency of the Council's decision making processes. The 16 formal meetings which were webcast between 01 January 2016 and 01 September 2016 were viewed by a total of 5069 times which equates to 317 viewers per meeting.
- 3.4 The ongoing use of the webcasting system has identified the shortcomings of the existing infrastructure within the Council Chamber. These primarily relate to its age and the increased use of digital functionality with the original analogue connectivity.

#### **4. Current situation / Proposal.**

- 4.1 The current systems are suitable for basic meetings but do not effectively support the complex demands expected in this digital age. The effectiveness and quality of High Definition (HD) inputs and displays which are currently installed in the Council Chamber are significantly reduced when using the existing analogue infrastructure.
- 4.2 To address this issue and to optimise the effectiveness of the single integrated system used for the display and control of the audio visual and webcasting facilities, it is proposed that an upgrade to the infrastructure within the Council Suite (Council Chamber/Committee Rooms/Member's Room and Cabinet Meeting Room) be undertaken to provide HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) connectivity and data switching between the existing installed devices. The proposed upgrade will also provide an element of future proofing to enable the infrastructure to support the up and coming digital technologies including 4K which are becoming more available and cost effective.
- 4.3 The proposed upgrade of the infrastructure will provide:
- Full HDMI connectivity of all displays and controls in the Council Suite
  - The effective switching between all HD displays using a touch screen controller.
  - HDMI input facilities for Laptops and other devices in the Council Chamber.
  - A wireless click and share network to enable presentations to be used for devices not normally supported or without accessing to the Council's network.
- 4.4 The current systems are provided by Auditel Rental and Services Limited who were successful in the previous competitive tender and now have an ongoing service level agreement for the maintenance of the bespoke Council Chamber systems. They currently provide the control systems, webcasting functionality, displays and outputs including electronic voting, camera displays, microphones, meeting management by the chairperson, audio enhancement for the hearing impaired, webcasting of meeting and delegate secure access.
- 4.5 Any upgrades to the infrastructure will be required to integrate effectively with the existing Auditel hardware and control systems. In addition, the use of any equipment which has not been supplied or authorised by Auditel will invalidate the

service warranty that has been provided as part of our continuing software, webcasting and maintenance agreement with Auditel.

4.6 The use of an alternative supplier for the provision of this infrastructure may compromise the operation of the single integrated systems used in the Council Chamber and Council Suite. Auditel will still be required to undertake reconfiguration of the interfaces with their equipment using the enhanced infrastructure in order to optimise the existing HD systems currently operating over the analogue network. It is considered essential to maintain the integrity of the existing systems to:

- provide effective control of all of the inputs and outputs of the chamber systems from a single control position.
- ensure that the Chairperson is able to manage, view and change the displays during public meetings
- maintain the flexibility in the use of the systems to enable professional audio visual outputs which are suitable for public viewing and broadcast.
- maintain the planned schedule of meetings and webcasts.

4.7 Under Rule 7.2.2 of the Council's CPRs, the provision of a digital infrastructure as outlined above would usually require a minimum of three quotations to be sourced. However, in light of the implications for our current warranties with Auditel, should any other supplier be used, we are seeking a waiver under Rule 3.2.3 of the CPR's, on the basis that 'The works /goods /services can be provided only by a particular Tenderer for reasons that are technical, artistic or connected with the protection of exclusive rights'

4.8 Therefore, it is proposed that in order to facilitate the provision of a digital infrastructure within the Council Suite that a contract be awarded to Auditel Systems Limited to update the infrastructure as described.

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

5.1 This report is requesting a waiver under the Councils Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) in respect of the procurement of these services.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 The provision of a single integrated control system and enhanced displays for the Council Suite does not have a direct equalities impact and will maintain the requirement for fair and equal access under the Equalities Act.

## **7. Financial Implications.**

7.1 The provision of this enhancement will be met from Welsh Government grant. There is sufficient funding remaining to support this upgrade (approximately £18,700) and to meet the costs of webcasting the planned target of 10 meetings a year until March 2018.

## 8. Recommendation.

8.1 It is therefore recommended that Cabinet:

- a) approves a waiver under Rule 3.2.3 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules from the requirement to obtain quotes or tenders by open competition for the supply of equipment to upgrade the existing Council Suite systems from analogue to digital connectivity.
- b) authorises the Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services to enter into a contract with Auditel Rental and Services Limited on behalf of the Council for the supply of digital connectivity as detailed in the report.

**P A Jolley**  
**Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services**  
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Background documents: None