

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

28 MAY 2015

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 update the Democratic Services Committee of the progress that has been made in respect of the implementation of webcasting for 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, meet the requirements of the "On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales" report. Webcasting will also 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, akin to 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 On 30 April 2014, Council approved the recording and broadcasting of meetings and approved initial proposals to take forward the webcasting of meetings

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 In July 2014, Elected Members attended the Webcasting Member Development sessions provided by the WLGA. These sessions provided Elected Members and officers with background on the aims and intentions of webcasting and highlighted its potential benefits and pitfalls.
- 4.2 Council agreed that to reduce the cost of implementation and operation, the Council Chamber would be used for all webcasts. As a result, work was carried out to improve the displays and update some of the presentation systems within the Council Chamber. In November 2014 a pilot webcast took place as a proof of concept.
- 4.3 Information identified during the Member development sessions and the webcasting pilot was added to the requirements for the provision of a webcasting service for the Authority.
- 4.4 Quotes were invited to provide 150 hours of webcasts over a 3 year period. A number of quotes were received and assessed on a 60% quality and 40% cost basis.
- 4.5 The supplier was awarded the contract and the implementation plans have been put in place. These include the installation of the webcasting control system on 9-10 July 2015 which will allow the Democratic Services Team to set up, record and manage webcasts.
- 4.6 It is planned that a technical test of the webcasting service will be made at the Development Control Committee meeting on 23 July 2015. Following a successful webcast of that meeting further webcasts will be planned to be undertaken from September 2015. Suitable promotion will also be undertaken on the Authority's social media sites to highlight the forthcoming webcasts.
- 4.7 The hours available for webcasting can be used at the discretion of the Authority over the 3 year period. Therefore an initial plan based on a formal Committee meeting lasting 3 hours is being proposed which will enable each of the public formal Committees to be webcast at least once before 30 Apr 2016.

Date(s)	Committee	Planned Duration in Hours	Running Total Hours
23 Jul 2015	Development Control (Pilot)	3	3
03 Sep 2015	Development Control	3	6
26 Oct 2015	Development Control	3	9
26 Nov 2015	Development Control	3	12
07 Jan 2016	Development Control	3	12
18 Feb 2016	Development Control	3	12
31 Mar 2016	Development Control	3	12
11 May 2016	Development Control	3	12
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Cabinet	3	15
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Cabinet Committee – Equalities	3	18
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Cabinet Committee – Corporate Parenting	3	21
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Adult Social Care OSC	3	24
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Children & Young People OSC	3	27
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Community Environment & Leisure OSC	3	30
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Corporate Resources & Improvement OSC	3	33

Date(s)	Committee	Planned Duration in Hours	Running Total Hours
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Partnerships & Governance OSC	3	36
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Audit Committee	3	39
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Council	3	42
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Democratic Services	3	45
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Licensing Committee	3	48
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Town & Community Council Forum	3	51
01 Sep 2015–30 Apr 2016	Rights of Way Sub-Committee	3	54

4.8 The following Committees contain predominantly exempt information and therefore it would not be appropriate or cost effective to webcast these meetings:

- Appeals Panel
- Appointments Committee
- Licensing Sub-Committees
- Standards Committee

4.9 The Development Control Committee is a regulatory Committee and currently has a higher level of public interest than other committees which is why it is proposed that every meeting of the committee be webcast.

4.10 The Head of Democratic Services will liaise with the Chairpersons and Lead officers of the other committees which are expected to be webcast at least once between 01 Sep 2015 and 30 April 2016. The selection of suitable meeting dates will aim to maximise public interest in the webcast with appropriate items of public interest on the agenda. It is hoped that the full list of meetings which are planned to be webcast will be made publically available by 01 September 2015.

4.11 The statistics from all webcast meetings will be monitored and recorded. Viewing figures for live and archived viewings will subsequently be reported to the Democratic Services Committee. These figures will be used to identify future level of webcast allocation to Committees.

4.12 It is assumed that the planning figures for the duration of meetings may be slightly in excess of the actual duration of the meeting. This should then allow for approximately 50 hours of webcasts being undertaken in each of the 2016-17 and 2017-18 years. The running total of webcast hours will also be monitored and additional webcasts will be arranged to ensure that the 50 hours of webcast material is used per year.

4.13 Additional webcasting refresher training will be provided to members and officers. This may include training from an external source although with the limitations on existing budgets some of this training may need to be undertaken in house.

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 All funding for webcasting is being met from the Welsh Government grant for webcasting. Some funding from existing budgets will be needed to provide the additional training as identified in Paragraph 4.13

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the Democratic Services Committee considers the content of this report and:
- Proposes any additional changes necessary to ensure the effective implementation of webcasting to Bridgend County Borough Council
 - Endorses the report and agrees that it be submitted to Council and Cabinet for approval as necessary

P A Jolley
Assistant Chief Executive – Legal & Regulatory Services
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Contact Officer: Gary Jones
Head of Democratic Services

Telephone: (01656) 643385

E-mail: Gary.Jones@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Democratic Services,
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend.
CF31 4WB

Background Documents: None