

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

24 NOVEMBER 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 Cabinet regarding the progress that has been made in respect of the implementation of webcasting for meetings of Cabinet, 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 in October 2015 which will allow the Democratic Services Team to set up, record and manage webcasts. The hours available for webcasting can be used at the discretion of the Authority over the 3 year period. An initial plan was developed for the delivery of webcasting but due to the uncertainty regarding the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards the plan was put on hold until clarification had been received.
- 4.6 The requirements for the simultaneous translation of committee meetings is now expected to be implemented from 30 March 2016. Therefore, it is planned that a technical test of the webcasting service will be undertaken in December 2015 and following a successful webcast it is proposed that further webcasts of formal committee meetings will be undertaken from January 2016.
- 4.7 Therefore, an initial plan based on a formal Committee meeting lasting 3 hours is being proposed which will enable many of the public formal Committees to be webcast before 30 Mar 2016.

Date(s)	Committee	Planned Duration in Hours	Running Total Hours
05 Jan 2016	Children & Young People OSC (School Performance)	3	3
07 Jan 2016	Development Control	3	6
14 Jan 2016	Partnerships & Governance OSC (Budget)	3	9
27 Jan 2016	Community Environment & Leisure OSC	3	12
28 Jan 2016	Audit Committee	3	15
05 Feb 2016	Corporate Resources & Improvement OSC (Budget)	3	18
11 Feb 2016	Adult Social Care OSC	3	21
18 Feb 2016	Development Control	3	24
01 Mar 2016	Cabinet (Budget)	3	27
10 Mar 2016	Council (Budget)	3	30

- 4.8 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 two meetings of this committee be webcast during this period.

- 4.9 The statistics from all webcast meetings will be monitored and recorded. Viewing figures for live and archived viewings will subsequently be reported and these figures will be used to identify the future level of webcast allocations to Committees.
- 4.10 Additional webcasting refresher training will be provided to members and officers. Training sessions have been provisionally arranged for 4 January 2016 and a repeat session will be held on 25 January 2016.
- 4.11 It is anticipated that progress will be made on the provision of dual language webcasts and a subsequent report will be presented to Council with proposals for webcasting following the implementation of the updated Welsh Language Standards.
- 4.12 Following approval of this proposal and the completion of a successful technical test appropriate promotion will be undertaken on the Authority's social media sites to highlight the forthcoming webcasts.

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 Funding for the provision of webcasting is being met from a Welsh Government grant. Some funding from existing budgets will be needed to provide the additional training as identified in Paragraph 4.10. Additional funding may be required to deliver dual language webcasting to meet the Welsh Language Standards and this will be considered as part of the overall Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That Cabinet considers the content of this report and approves the implementation of webcasting for meetings of Cabinet.

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Background Documents: None