

# Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

8 January 2019

## Recording of Committee Meetings

### 1. Contacts

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### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet approves the ongoing audio recording and publishing of the Council, the Cabinet, the Planning Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meetings online.**

### 3. Background

- 3.1 At the Council meeting on 22 September 2015, when considering a recommendation from the Cabinet regarding government regulations on openness of local government, it was resolved (minute 43) that: 'That the Cabinet be recommended to undertake a one year trial of publication of audio recordings of proceedings at the Council, the Cabinet, the Planning Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meetings.'
- 3.2 The trial completed in January 2017 and all the above meetings were recorded. However there remained some issues with the system provided by the contractor and recordings of two meetings were not capable of being properly heard or accessed after the meetings. Several further meetings required significant officer time to correct problems with recordings so that they could be accessed and an extension of the pilot was agreed by the Cabinet in May 2017.
- 3.3 During the further pilot period technical problems have been overcome and the system is now one that the Divisional Manager has confidence in. Some updated hardware has been put in place and software conflicts have been overcome. Further, work to publicise the availability of recorded meetings has been undertaken with the support of the Public Relations team.
- 3.4 The benefits of the system remain as set out in previous reports – simple access by the public including persons who would otherwise find it difficult to attend meetings. It enables live broadcast which is of particular benefit for high-significance matters such as certain large planning applications. Some savings in officer time in hand-recording minutes are also being realised and also in investigating complaints about alleged conduct and statements made in meetings.

3.5 Against these benefits, the annual cost of the system is £3,900 per annum. An increase in set-up time and monitoring time has been required, though it is hoped that as the technology is improved and the problems have been addressed this impact will reduce.

#### **4. Outcomes to be Achieved**

4.1 The system will enable members, the public and officers to access recordings of meetings improving transparency and maintain efficient delivery of Democratic Services and Code of Conduct complaint decisions.

#### **5. Alternatives Considered**

5.1 The alternatives considered are whether or not to proceed with recording of meetings using the current system, cease to record or alternatively whether to test the market again through a further procurement exercise.

5.2 The views of IT and Facilities have been sought and the clear opinion is that having put significant effort into installing and improving the systems, the system is now sufficiently fit for purpose and delivering the intended outcomes sought by members for the original trial period.

5.3 The market for systems of this kind is relatively young and changing to another system at this time is likely to lead to similar issues of integration with any other product.

5.4 If Chichester District Council (CDC) was to cease to record meetings then further resource to minute meetings in a more verbatim manner would be required, and there would be less certainty as to the investigation of any possible complaints about members at meetings.

#### **6. Resource and Legal Implications**

6.1 Funding of the contract will be £3,900 per annum funded from existing budget. The costs of the microphone system are not relevant to this contract as the sound system would remain in place whatever committee recording software is used.

#### **7. Consultation**

7.1 Members were all invited to attend microphone system demonstrations to allow them involvement in deciding the initial specification of the future system

7.2 Colleagues in Democratic Services, Facilities and IT have been part of the group testing the system through the pilot period.

#### **8. Community Impact and Corporate Risks**

8.1 An audio record of the Council's main meetings published online will allow local people to have access to, and an understanding of, CDC's decision making processes. Those who find it difficult to attend meetings, due to disability, caring responsibilities, work commitments or access to transport, will be able to benefit. An equality impact assessment was carried out as to the

change adopting recording in 2015 and the recommended decision would mean that no change occurred requiring a further assessment.

8.2 There is no other direct community or corporate impact from the recommendations of this report other than as set out above.

## 9. Other Implications

<b>Are there any implications for the following?</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>		X
<b>Climate Change and Biodiversity</b>		X
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact</b>		X
<b>Safeguarding and Early Help</b>		X
<b>General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)</b>		X
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>		X
<b>Other</b> (please specify)		X

## 10. Appendices

10.1 None

## 11. Background Papers

11.1 None