

# **Chichester District Council**

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 March 2015**

### **Report of the Committee Audio System and Recording Meetings Task and Finish Group**

#### **1. Contacts**

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#### **2. Recommendation to CABINET**

- 2.1. That a new microphone system be purchased with the capability of making audio recordings for council use and for publication online.**
- 2.2. That a one year pilot be approved to audio record and publish Council, Cabinet, Planning and Overview and Scrutiny meetings online.**

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 A previous scrutiny task and finish group met during 2012 and produced a protocol for audio recording of certain Council meetings and recommended to Cabinet that a pilot be undertaken to assess the value of recording meetings. Cabinet did not support this recommendation.
- 3.2 At Council on 23 September 2014, when considering a recommendation from Cabinet regarding Government regulations on openness of Local Government, including a requirement to allow any member of the public to take photographs, audio record or film proceedings of all meetings, excluding Part 2 agenda items, Mr Ransley reminded the Council of the previous proposal to audio record certain meetings which had failed to gain majority support. He was concerned that the Council would not have its own full record of proceedings to rebut any misrepresentation or out-of-context use of press or public recordings. Council members agreed and asked him to bring forward for consideration a further proposal on recording meetings.
- 3.3 Due to the ongoing limited life span of the microphone system, £70,000 provision has been made within the Council's Asset Replacement Programme (ARP) for a like-for-like replacement in 2015/16. The ARP will be considered by Cabinet in February 2015 as part of the budget spending plans. Following the considerations and recommendations from the previous Task and Finish Group, it would seem appropriate to consider all options and costs in order to future proof any replacement equipment.
- 3.4 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 18 November 2014 agreed that as Members are the primary users of the microphone system, a task and finish group be set up to consider options around a replacement microphone/audio

system and to reconsider future recording of meetings.

3.5 The purpose of the review was to explore the desirability and feasibility of:

- a) Audio recording meetings or audio visual recordings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees.
- b) Making these recordings available on the Council's website taking account of:
  - i. Costs (not just the initial cost of installing equipment, but also on-going costs, such as editing and summarising) and added value, so that these can be balanced against other priorities.
  - ii. Experience of other Councils, particularly in relation to web-casting, including information about viewing figures, public response, and demand.
  - iii. Legal implications, such as data protection and human rights.

and based on previous research carried out.

#### **4. Outcomes to be achieved**

- 4.1 A replacement microphone system to deliver the needs of the Council over the next 10 years.
- 4.2 Options on whether to resource future audio recording or webcasting of the Council's meetings.

#### **5. Proposal**

- 5.1. Members considered options for replacement of the microphone system.
- 5.2. The group considered options for webcasting meetings but decided against introducing this due to costs, resource requirements and a perceived lack of value for money.
- 5.3. The group recommended that a one year pilot be undertaken to audio record and publish Council, Cabinet, Planning and Overview and Scrutiny meeting audio records online be approved.

#### **6. Alternatives that have been considered**

- 6.1. A webcasting proposal from Public-i was considered by the group, with pricing and specification.
- 6.2. WSCC was consulted to establish whether any shared arrangement could be progressed. However they are still in the process of removing asbestos from their Council Chamber and will not be updated their webcasting system at this time. This option was therefore not progressed.

## 7. Resource and legal implications

- 7.1. £70,000 has been set aside in the Asset Replacement Plan for replacement of the Council's microphone system.
- 7.2. Server costs and support over 5 years - £10k.
- 7.3. Template design and development £3-£5k.
- 7.4. There will be 5-7 days of Webteam staff time to cover web design, development, deployment, configuration, training, server build, security testing and sign off. Member Services officers will set up the audio system at the beginning of the meeting and download the record at the end.
- 7.5. Costs at 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 will be met from existing service budgets.

## 8. Consultation

- 8.1. Members were all invited to attend microphone system demonstrations to allow them involvement in deciding the specification of the future system.
- 8.2. A member of the task and finish group may wish to be a representative on the project group which will consider the procurement of the microphones/audio system.

## 9. Community impact and corporate risks

- 9.1. An audio record of the Council's main meetings published online will allow local people to have access to and understanding of the Council'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.
- 9.2. Having an audio record on file may work to reduce the number of people who attend meetings even further. Alternatively, the number of residents listening to recordings may be very low. At the end of the one year pilot the Council would need to assess the value of audio recording meetings to assess whether it should be continued or not.

## 10. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
	Yes	No
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>		x
<b>Climate Change:</b>		x
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact:</b> Those who find it difficult to attend meetings, due to disability, caring responsibilities, work commitments or access to transport, will find the audio recordings beneficial.	x	
<b>Safeguarding:</b>		x
<b>Other (Please specify):</b> eg Biodiversity		x

## **11. Appendices**

None

## **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1. Task and Finish Group meeting 29 January 2015 agenda and notes (exempt papers)