

Chichester District Council

FULL COUNCIL

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Recording and broadcasting of Committee Meetings

1. Contacts

Report Author:

Jane Dodsworth, Head of Business Improvement Services (01243 534729)
e-mail jdodsworth@chichester.gov.uk

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Bruce Finch, Cabinet Member for Support Services (07751 351903)
e-mail bfinch@chichester.gov.uk

2. Executive Summary

The report below is an updated version of one discussed by the Cabinet on 8 September. The Council is invited to consider the concept, practicalities and cost of web-casting certain key Council meetings and advise the Cabinet of its views on the options before the Cabinet makes a final decision at its meeting on 6 October 2015. The Cabinet expressed a preference for a one year trial of webcasting, but wishes to know the Council's views.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1. That Cabinet determine which of the options for audio recording or web-casting of key committee meetings should be implemented for a one year pilot and consult Council for their views on the matter.**
- 3.2. That £22,238 be funded from reserves should Cabinet resolve to undertake the web-casting option after receiving the views of Council.**

4. Background

- 4.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Task and Finish Group at their meeting on 29 January 2015 had considered the specification of requirements for the replacement system and recommended to Cabinet that audio recording of meetings be undertaken for a one year pilot to assess usage. Members are referred to the OSC papers of 17 March 2015 for the debate.
- 4.2. At their meeting on 7 April 2015, Cabinet resolved (Minute 748) to replace the committee microphone system as part of the asset replacement programme - such replacement system to be capable of both audio recording and web-casting of committee meetings. They also requested Officers to bring back this report to a future Cabinet with detailed costs and the practicalities of audio and web-casting of committee meetings.

- 4.3. Comparing usage figures with other authorities varies depending upon whether the authority is a unitary, county or district. However, average viewing figures for a District with a similar committee structure shows viewings per committee over the preceding 12 month period are: Cabinet – 844; Council – 887; Planning – 506; Overview and Scrutiny - 814
- 4.4. Officers have subsequently awarded a contract for a replacement committee microphone system that is capable of audio and web-casting recording of meetings.

5. Outcomes to be achieved

- 5.1. To enable local residents to see or hear council decision-making meetings at a time and place convenient to themselves.
- 5.2. Pursuant to the Government's regulations on openness of local government, to undertake a one-year pilot of recording of Council, Cabinet, Planning, Overview and Scrutiny and Corporate Governance and Audit committee meetings.
- 5.3. To assess usage of such recordings at the conclusion of the pilot prior to considering longer-term provision.
- 5.4. To provide an official recording of key committee meetings.

6. Proposal

- 6.1. To provide Cabinet with costs and functionality of both audio and web-casting of meetings. Both options to be capable of being published on-line and compatible with the Council's web-hosted committee management system.
- 6.2. Option 1 - Audio Recording only
 - a) The Council has the functionality to record meetings at present.
 - b) To convert these recordings to a user-friendly format online requires the licensing of software that will attach a full recording of the meeting to the online Committee minutes and enable users to select an item of interest within the meeting and to listen to the discussion and debate for that particular item only.
 - c) Since this option is audio, it will be necessary for Members and Officers to clearly announce themselves prior to discussion to identify the speaker clearly to the user.
- 6.3. Option 2 – Audio Recording including Web-Casting
 - a) This option provides a panoramic view of the meeting.

- b) Cameras would be placed within the ceiling of the committee rooms to capture this view. The cameras would be automated as much as possible to zoom in and out.

Although manual intervention is possible using the software console, Officers are not recommending this at this time, due to the support required of the Committee staff present at the meeting. Costs associated with this are included within the total package cost of web-casting as set out in paragraph 8.1.

- c) The new microphone system has the ability for Members to insert an identity badge into the microphone system. This registers that device to the Member and provides a name tag online when their microphone is activated to 'speak', providing a clear view of who is speaking.
- d) A 2mb broadband line will be required to upload video content to the committee system.
- e) As with audio recording, users have the option to view the entire meeting or to select an agenda item of interest from the meeting.

6.4. Web-casting may be streamed 'live' or the recording is posted on the website retrospectively. To record a meeting for live streaming requires more support from the Committee staff supporting the meeting. Viewing figures from other authorities using web-casting suggest that live viewing tends to increase as users awareness grows that web-casting is available. Officers would recommend that any pilot should commence with retrospective posting of the recording initially, with the intention to publish live recordings later in the pilot so that both options may be analysed at the end of the pilot.

6.5. Both options are compatible with the new microphone system and committee system.

7. Alternatives that have been considered

7.1. Do nothing - consideration has been given not to provide recording of committee meetings, other than official minutes as at present. However, the Task and Finish Group did recommend that in light of the Government's transparency agenda, it would be appropriate to provide a full, official recording of discussion and debate.

7.2. The remaining two options are set out in paragraph 6 above for the Cabinet to consider.

8. Resource and legal implications

8.1. Costs for both options are provided below:

One Year Pilot	Audio Recording only		Audio + Web-Casting	
	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue
Software licences	0	£3,900	0	£21,317*
Broadband Line	0	0	£160	£921
Total	£0	£3,900	£160	£22,238

* Note: This figure is based on 140 hours of recording and may be discounted following the pilot if the service was retained and the Council entered into a longer term contract. Such discount depends upon length of contract and whether the payment is made annually or in advance of the term. Discounts range from 9-20% if paid annually and 10-30% if paid in advance of the term.

- 7.2 Costs associated with audio recording can be met from within existing service budgets. There are no costs associated with exiting from the pilot. However, web-casting will require additional revenue funding to be met from reserves.
- 7.3 Resource from Member Services and the Facilities team would be required as follows and will be met from within existing resources:
- a. Set the on-line committee system so that it integrates the meeting with the web-casting service.
 - b. Immediately prior to the meeting (using the software console) contact the web-casting service to test run the connection.
 - c. Start the meeting on the console.
 - d. During the meeting update the console with the time each agenda item starts.
 - e. Update the console to end the meeting.
 - f. Update the console to stop and start the meeting for coffee breaks and Part 2 items.
 - g. Synchronise both systems once a week.

Actions (a) and (b) would be undertaken by Member Services and/or the Facilities Team as part of meeting preparation. Actions (c) and (e) – (g) would be undertaken by Member Services. Action (d) is only required during the meeting if it is a live web-cast.

- 7.4 On conclusion of the pilot officers will prepare a full evaluation detailing the costs, performance, usage and other resources required to implement on a permanent basis.

9. Consultation

- 9.1. Members of the Task and Finish Group were present at demonstrations of the new microphone system and are assured of its capabilities in supporting recording functionality. During this process the implications of audio recording were considered by the Group and Officers.

- 9.2. Following Cabinet on 7 April 2015, Member Services, ICT and Facilities have been consulted on the support required for web-casting of meetings. They believe that no additional resources are required, provided the trial is operated as set out in paragraph 7.3. One of the purposes of the trial will be to evaluate resource requirements.
- 9.3. As the proposals affect the whole of Council it is proposed that views be sought at their meeting on the 22 September prior to a final decision being taken by Cabinet at their meeting on 6 October.

10. Community impact and corporate risks

- 9.1 In a rural and geographically large district the availability of audio and/or web broadcasts of certain Council meetings should enable greater participation and interest in Council business.

11. Other Implications

Crime & Disorder:		None
Climate Change:		None
Human Rights and Equality Impact: Equality of access to the Council decision-making process would be supported through the provision of on-line recording of meetings.	Yes	
Safeguarding:		None

12. Appendices

None

13. Background Papers

None