

## CABINET

Wednesday, 13 June 2018

### WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS (REP1874)

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides details of a project to enable the webcasting of some council meetings. It describes the benefits, costs and work involved to deliver the service.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards in the District
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Mark Bee Leader of the Council
<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Ann Carey Head of ICT 01502 523215 <a href="mailto:ann.carey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">ann.carey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A proposal has been made to offer web casting of key Waveney council meetings, this would mean that a council meeting could be 'live' video streamed and accessible online. Although council meetings are open to the public to attend, actual attendance generally tends to be low except for those meetings involving high profile or contentious issues.
- 1.2 Developments in video technology, and the increased availability of consumer devices able to access video content, means that providing a service to web cast meetings is now a more feasible option. Web casting of council meetings is increasing with over 100 councils now regularly web casting some or all of their meetings with many others providing audio recordings. There are also examples of government support for using digital technology to increase public participation with the Welsh Government providing funding to some Welsh councils to enable them to provide web casting.
- 1.3 There are a range of benefits to be achieved from providing web casts of council meetings and these include increasing democratic engagement and debate especially on key local issues such as planning as well as improving the transparency of council processes and decision making. It also enables members of the public who are unable to attend a meeting to see and hear the debates that influence the decisions the council makes.
- 1.4 The proposal is in line with the Digital Strategy and the commitment to ensure that full benefit is realised for our customers and communities from technical innovation. The availability and ease of access to both the live web cast as well as recordings of past meetings from any internet enabled consumer device (e.g. smartphones, ipads, tablet computers) means that they are likely to reach a much wider digital audience than could be achieved through the publication of meeting minutes alone. The recordings also ensure there is a permanent digital record of the meeting though the published minutes will remain the approved record.

## **2 WEB CASTING SOLUTION**

- 2.1 The introduction of web casting of council meetings from the main conference rooms (G01 and G02) at Riverside will require a major investment in new audio visual equipment including cameras and a new microphone system. With the creation of new East Suffolk Council from April 2019 and to ensure compatibility with the Deben Room at East Suffolk House, it is recommended that the Bosch Dicientis microphone system is used. As the Riverside building is shared with Suffolk County Council, any proposed changes to the AV systems will need to be agreed with SCC before the requirements specification is finalised. The opportunity will also be taken to integrate and 'simplify' the user control interface which will improve performance and so address AV system issues which have been raised by users.
- 2.2 The detail requirement specification for the proposed solution will include integration with the new Committee Management System which is currently being implemented, this will mean that information and documents relevant to a meeting (e.g. member details, agenda, meeting papers, etc) will be displayed as part of the web cast.

- 2.3 The implementation of the solution will involve robust testing and user training, this will include dedicated sessions for Members to demonstrate the technology and to address any queries. It has been identified that dedicated resources will be required to manage the web cast during meetings and this will be closely monitored to assess the impact on staff resources.
- 2.4 The web casting and hosting costs are based on the number of hours of meetings that are required each year and how long we wish them to be available on the web casting web site. A 120 hour per year contract has been used for costing purposes as this would cover Full Council, Cabinet and Planning as well as occasional Audit/Scrutiny or Licencing meetings. The contract would need to be revised with the implementation of the new east Suffolk Council as this will reduce the total number of web cast meeting hours.

### **3 WEB CASTING AND NEW EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL**

- 3.1 In consideration of the implementation of the new east Suffolk Council, a similar proposal to install a web casting solution in the Conference Room at East Suffolk House has been made. This will be based on using the same technology and systems as for Riverside in order to ensure consistency across the two main office buildings.
- 3.2 The proposed solution would also include an option to provide a video conferencing service which would 'join' the two rooms, so that large numbers of users can participate using the camera / microphone systems at each site over a dedicated link. This will enhance the collaborative working facilities between the two offices. Note that this type of VC solution uses different technology to that used for the existing VC meeting rooms in East Suffolk House & Riverside and therefore can not currently be integrated i.e. it will not be possible to have a VC meeting between Deben Room and SMT Room at Riverside.

### **4 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?**

- 4.1 The provision of web casting supports the Critical Success factor 'Communities' in that it increases transparency of council decision making processes and encourages greater democratic engagement thereby helping create "communities which feel engaged, valued and empowered".

### **5 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The costs of upgrading the audio visual equipment in the Riverside Conference rooms at Riverside to enable web casting is estimated to be £75k with annual subscription and support costs of £20k per annum. This is based on providing 120 hours of web casting per year and a 12 month archive service.
- 5.2 Financial provision to cover both the implementation and ongoing revenue costs is included within existing budgets.

- 5.3 The Head of ICT will be responsible for the delivery of the project with procurement managed in line with Contract Procedure Rules and implementation managed using corporate project management standards.

## **6 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 The implementation of a web casting service will support increased public engagement and awareness of the Council's work and decision making, it will also provide enhanced collaborative working facilities between East Suffolk House and Riverside.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That approval is given to implementation of web casting system at Riverside.

### **APPENDICES – None**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS – None**