ANGUS COUNCIL – 10 MAY 2018

COMMITTEE MEETING WEB CASTING

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (PEOPLE)

1.   PURPOSE

This report outlines two options for delivering audio and video streaming and recording of committee meetings. Providing this capability would allow for citizens to watch/listen to meetings on digital devices, either live or at a later date.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council;

(i)   Notes the report and considers the outline options provided and estimated related costs;

(ii)   Advises whether further work should be commissioned to deliver the capabilities offered; and

(iii)   Agree that if webcasting is to be deployed in Angus a further report confirming final costs and funding options be brought forward for consideration prior to implementation.

3.   BACKGROUND

A number of councils throughout the UK have been casting (streaming) audio and video feeds of council committee meetings for many years now. Casting has the potential to offer further transparency to the council's decision making process by making access to the proceedings more generally available, including;

- Access to audio and video, live or through published recordings, allowing immediate access to full proceedings or subsequent access to all or parts of recordings. Availability through a wide variety of devices allows citizens to view recordings at their comfort and convenience
- Wider availability for citizens who cannot attend meetings due to schedules or through expense/time to travel to Town and County Hall in Forfar. This also provides an opportunity for involvement when meetings for popular subjects limit the physical audience space available within the council chambers
- A more detailed record of the meetings beyond minutes, which supports the council's desire to provide data and information to citizens to inform them and reduce unnecessary contact
- Giving an opportunity for members of the public to see live debates and individual member contributions to the issues affecting the Council and its citizens

Figures showing live and archived views for a selection of councils in the UK are shown below. Note that these are mainly for full council meetings;

	Aberdeen City		Aylesbury Vale DC		Solihull		Moray
	Live	Archived	Live	Archived	Live	Archived	Total
Minimum	26	69	0	27	7	34	404
Maximum	834	367	39	164	52	151	919
Average	227	147	19	77	29	83	656

Following the action noted from the meeting of Angus Council on 8th of February, officers have approached potential suppliers who can deliver this functionality, and described two outline options that offer suitable audio/video capability. This paper describes the options offered, and notes some of the issues around the management and operation of such a facility.

4.   **PROPOSALS**

These options are based on investigation of suppliers able to deliver through national frameworks and with existing customer bases in UK local government. Discussions with relevant suppliers have taken place and initial quotes are based on estimates of audience/frequency, hardware requirements and capacity requirements for communications. While they give a good estimate of related costs and operational requirements, further work would be required to work with suppliers to define exact requirements and costs should Angus Council decide to proceed.

The solutions offer casting and recording of meetings without any required technical knowledge of video recording, editing or uploading onto the web. Multiple cameras (at least 4) and directional microphones ensure that the video continues to focus on the actual speakers, automatically switching camera as discussion and debate continues.

Both options require staff effort to load meeting schedules, agendas and reports to the hosting site in advance of meetings taking place. In addition, it is expected that 10 – 20 minutes effort is required to test equipment and connectivity prior to the start of each meeting, and 10 minutes to close off the meeting after completion and potentially 'top and tail' the recording to tidy up before uploading to the web site.

An officer would be required to manage proceedings throughout the meeting itself, to ensure that the system is monitored and that progression through the meeting agenda items and actions is indexed against the recording. This allows people watching an archived recording to skip directly to any agenda item of interest.

Feedback from other councils indicates that officer support requirements vary considerably depending on set up. The support requirement could be a dedicated officer around an equivalent of LG7 for 3 - 5 hours per meeting at a cost of around £60 - £100 per meeting. Some councils webcast full council only, whilst others webcast full council plus one other committee. In the case of Angus Council, if we assume webcasting for full council plus one other committee, then the yearly officer support cost is in the region of 14 x £100 = £1400.

At least two staff would need to be familiar with the system and operations to ensure cover for all meetings.

Example Supplier A

Supplier A offer a subscription-based solution, which offers unlimited events through a self-service facility which would be facilitated by council staff. Meetings would be viewable by up to 1,000 concurrent users, and would be available for 12 months. This provides comparable capacity with the Example Supplier B option below, but fewer concurrent users could be considered to reduce licensing costs.

Hardware for video devices or audio recording is not included as part of the solution so is included separately in the table below. Estimated costs for these are based on known device costs, but may vary depending on the quality of hardware required. Costs also include a dedicated network line, required to guarantee performance for streaming, which would be provisioned by BT instead of the supplier.

Total **estimated cumulative** costs for 1 to 4 year options are shown below.

Item	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years
Solution Licensing and Storage	£18,000	£36,000	£54,000	£72,000
Network Installation & Leasing (BT)	£353	£629	£953	£1,277
Officer Resource	£1,400	£2,800	£4,200	£5,600
Video/Audio Devices	£2,760	£2,760	£2,760	£2,760
Integration to Website (Est)	£500	£500	£500	£500
Total	**£23,013**	**£42,689**	**£62,413**	**£82,137**

Example Supplier B

Supplier B offer a fully managed solution that includes 4 fixed cameras with an encoder, and a tablet device as a controller. Annual recording of 120 hours of video is provided with 12 months of archived meetings which more than covers webcasting of full council plus one Committee meeting.

Costs include support and maintenance of leased hardware, updates to software, and live support. Also included is a dedicated network line, required to guarantee performance for streaming, which would be provisioned by BT instead of the supplier.

Total **estimated cumulative** costs for 1 to 4 year options are shown below.

Item	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years
Device Lease, Streaming and Storage	£17,765	£32,527	£44,786	£58,379
Network Installation & Leasing (BT)	£353	£629	£953	£1,277
Officer Resource	£1,400	£2,800	£4,200	£5,600
Installation & Project Management	£6,370	£6,370	£6,370	£6,370
Integration to Website (Est)	£500	£500	£500	£500
Total	**£26,388**	**£42,826**	**£56,809**	**£72,126**

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No specific provision for the costs of webcasting Council meetings has been provided in the 2018/19 revenue or capital budgets. If members are minded to proceed to implementation a suitable funding source would need to be found both in the current year and then on an ongoing basis. If members are minded to approve the adoption of webcasting Council meetings it is recommended that final costs and funding options be brought forward in a further report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Members would need to be mindful of the implications of, and interpretation of, debate in the Chamber creating a wider and broader debate in the community. This would likely result in more engagement with individuals and groups requiring feedback and response.

Other councils appear to have been selective over which committee meetings are broadcast and archived and a decision would be required about how members would wish to handle this aspect.

Hardware failures will always be possible and can be expected. Neither of these are fully resilient services. While checks to ensure functionality prior to each meeting can help reduce the impact of these, other options may also need to be investigated such as local recordings or audio only.

Timescales to implementation are likely to be in the region of 4 to 6 months dependent on line installation and procurement approach.

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