

Subject: Web Casting
Date of Meeting: 1 July 2008
Report of: Director of Strategy & Governance
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The question of web casting of meetings has been raised by Members and is a facility that has been encouraged by the government as part of the e-government campaign. The intention is that the council will undertake a trial with a local provider and web cast a number of meetings over a 12-month period from September 2008 and determine whether it is a medium that should be invested in.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the report be noted and that the web casting of meetings including the Cabinet, Planning Committee, 2 x Scrutiny Committees and Full Council be undertaken as part of the trial period, (with other meetings being web cast following consultations with the Leader and Chairmen).

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Currently about 50 local authorities in England and Wales regularly web casts meetings, events and projects. About 40 more web cast other events like promotional films on an ad hoc basis. By way of example, East Sussex County Council:
- Web casts meetings of the Cabinet, Full Council and Planning Committees from the Council Chamber.
 - In addition, meetings of the Sussex Police Authority, youth events and briefings are web cast.
 - Committee administrators operate the web casting equipment.
 - The web casting facilities and product support are provided by Public-i, which are based in Brighton.

- Web casting is managed from within democratic services.

3.2 Public-i currently provides East Sussex, as well as a number of other authorities such as Bristol with a web casting facility and is based locally. Following discussions with Public-i, there is an opportunity to trial their system for a year with a view to then seeking a formal contract via a tender process. The system provides for a number of fixed cameras to be sited in the council chamber which would then link to a portable base unit which feeds the information direct to Public-i's own server and then onto the web. The portable system also enables smaller meetings to be web cast as there is a remote camera provided e.g. Cabinet Member meetings.

3.3 The web casting of meetings does provide an additional means of communicating the decision-making process and informing the electorate of the actions of the council. It also enables other councillors to gain access to meetings and decisions when they wish and so ensure they are kept informed of matters.

3.4 There is a potential to expand the use of the facility to enable two-way communication of issues and views, making the use of petitions, debating forums, giving information on projects and seeking views on developments. A good example is Bristol.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The Leaders Group have previously considered the proposal and supported the trial period to determine whether web casting would be a useful addition to the council's communication mechanisms with the residents of the city.

4.2 Details of the proposal to web cast meetings were included in the report on the constitution which was considered by Full Council on the 24 April 2008.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 The agreed trial period together with the provision of cameras and associated equipment has cost £32k and was met from resources within the Legal & Democratic Services budget for 2007/08.

5.2 Following the assessment of the trial period, a decision will need to be made on whether to put a contract out to tender for the provision of a web casting facility and the necessary resources identified to provide such a facility.

Finance officer consulted: Patrick Rice

5 June 2008

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications associated with the report and appropriate guidance to Members and officers in respect of those meetings being web cast will be issued.

Lawyer consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis 5 June 2008

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no equalities implications arising from the report, however the provision of web casting will enable greater access to meetings and the decision-making process for those people who have internet facilities and are unable to attend the meetings.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from the report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime & disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The provision of web casting does enable an additional means of informing the electorate of the decisions being taken by the council; however the investment in necessary technology to maintain the service will need to be evaluated against the actual use of the facility by the public.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 There are no corporate or citywide implications arising from this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Background Documents

None

