

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	11 December, 2013
SUBJECT	Web-casting
PURPOSE	To submit the latest information on web-casting developments
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INTRODUCTION

1. It has already been reported to this committee that the Welsh Government is promoting local and inclusive democracy, amongst other matters, by encouraging the development of web-casting.
2. The Council has accepted a grant to enable the broadcasting of all or some of the Council's meetings.
3. By now, developments to facilitate this (in terms of cameras etc) have been completed in the Dafydd Orwig Chamber and Hywel Dda Chamber. The work completed so far means that we will be in a position to produce the material to be broadcast but we need to arrange for the broadcasting of that material on the web.

FURTHER WORK

4. In order to learn from the experience of others, I and another officer from the department visited Carmarthenshire County Council that has already introduced such a system in a situation where two languages are used. The visit proved very beneficial with a number of important lessons coming to the fore:-
 - The need to plan in detail in advance and, crucially, to allow enough time to pilot the system before going live.
 - The importance of reducing as much as possible the work related to the "running" of the system when a meeting is taking place
 - The need to increase members' awareness of the sensitivity of such systems
5. Further discussions continue and we are working on a reasonable programme of work that should enable us to be able to broadcast for the first time early after April 2014 after appropriate piloting, introducing it gradually after then. In that time, we will have to invite bids for the work and, in this context, there is a National Framework Agreement that should facilitate this.
6. In terms of the committees under consideration, the contract with any provider would be for a certain amount of hours to be broadcast. Clearly, therefore, it would

be necessary to prioritise those of greatest interest. The intention at the start is to concentrate on the full Council and Planning Committee, choosing meetings of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees for the remainder of the hours on the basis of the likely interest in the matters to be considered.

7. Of course, this committee has already discussed one key element of the provision, how we will deal with the translation requirements. Clearly, at the moment there is simultaneous translation when a non-Welsh speaker is present but, if there is no non-Welsh speaker present, there is no translation. Consequently, if there is no non-Welsh speaker present at a meeting that is being web-cast, no translation will be provided and therefore, there would be no audio feed for the non-Welsh speaker viewing and listening on-line. The committee has accepted the suggestion that it would not be a good use of resources to provide a translation at every meeting “in case” a non-Welsh speaker wanted to listen. Once the system is operational, it is proposed that we review the use of the non-Welsh language stream to assess the demand before considering what provision if at all to make.
8. The initial discussions that have taken place with possible providers have offered the possibility of linking the web-casting system with a wider system to manage the Council’s management of its committee work. Such a system would be able to improve the management of its documents, being able to link discussions with the documents under consideration at the meetings and able to offer a “social media” link on matters of importance to the county.
9. One other important element is, of course, the cost. Whilst an element of the grant from the Welsh Government will help with the cost of setting up the system, we must be aware that moving to a system like this will have revenue implications – at a time when resources are reducing. Having said that, with the importance of democratic debate increasing, there will be clear value in ensuring that key discussions within the Council are open for everybody to see and understand and it would be of great benefit in terms of open democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee continues to support the introduction of the system, subject to the funding being adequate, seeking a report back to the next meeting on the detailed work plan for its introduction.