

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	6 November 2017
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Resources
Subject	-	Council Chamber Audio/Visual Equipment Upgrade

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 October 2017, considered a report on the Council Chamber Audio/Visual Equipment Upgrade. The recommendation and minute arising is reproduced below.

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be requested to approve that Options 1: Conference and Audio System Upgrade; 2: Video/Presentation System Upgrade; and 3: Camera & Webcasting Encoder Installation be purchased for the Council Chamber and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued at this point in time but kept under review.

OSC17/27. **COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT UPGRADE**

In April 2017, the Committee received a report on a number of options to upgrade the Audio/Visual (AV) equipment in the Council Chamber. The current wireless microphone system was approximately 10 years old and was proving unreliable and inadequate.

The options proposed were: Option 1: a complete overhaul (replacing projection equipment and installing fixed cameras; Options 2 and 3 video recording and camera/webcasting meetings in the future. The costs ranged from £34,000 to £68,000, plus £12,000 per annum to webcast. Following discussion, the Committee recommended to Cabinet that a complete overhaul be agreed, but that webcasting not be pursued and kept under review for future consideration. Members were advised that purchasing all three options at the same time would be cost effective and provided enhanced technology. Cabinet was not supportive of the proposals and expressed concerns regarding value for money, the procurement process and deferred the decision pending further information/investigation.

Further advice was sought on the procurement process, the systems used at neighbouring authorities, ICT infrastructure and technology advances, as well as a Member survey to gauge the level of support for upgrading the system. The following was noted:

- Procurement Process: East Sussex Procurement Hub managed all large-scale procurement exercises on behalf of the Council. Due to the specialist nature of the goods/services to be purchased, it was noted that an existing Framework Agreement would be used. Such agreements provided the opportunity to secure value for money and reduced the need to follow competitive procedure where there were limited suppliers.

- Neighbouring Authorities: East Sussex County Council webcast the majority of their meetings; September 2016 to 2017 usage data was appended to the report at Appendix B. Hastings Borough Council video recorded all meetings for viewing afterwards; during the period March 2017 to September 2017 there were 897 local views. Wealden District Council webcast all meetings; usage data was appended to the report at Appendix C. Lewes District Council webcast full Council meetings only and Eastbourne Borough Council had no webcast facilities. Members noted that overall webcasting viewing figures were minimal across the county.
- ICT / Infrastructure: The current system lacked modern connectivity support potentially resulting in compatibility issues and technology failure.
- Members' Survey: All Members were asked to provide their views on the three options proposed. Only 15 Members responded with the majority indicating that Option 1 (93%) or Options 1 and 2 (60%) be supported.

Members were reminded that funding had been set aside in the Capital Programme to fund the Rother 2020 Programme which included upgrading the AV equipment however this did not include the £12,000 annual licensing fee to webcast live meetings. Additional funding would need to be incorporated into the Revenue Budget in future years should webcasting be commenced.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to re-recommend to Cabinet that all three options be purchased for the Council Chamber and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued at this point in time but kept under review.

(Councillors C.A. Clark, S.H. Earl and S.D. Elford each declared a personal interest in this matter in so far as they were elected Members of East Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during consideration thereof).

(Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda Item 5.1).

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director of Resources