



## RECORDING OF MEETINGS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 came into force at the end of July. These regulations allow any person attending a public local government meeting to take photographs, film, or audio-record the proceedings, for either simultaneous or subsequent broadcast, and also to report on meetings as they happen via social media such as Twitter. The Council has a protocol in place for the guidance of the public.
- 1.2 The Cabinet is asked to consider whether, as a natural progression from the introduction of the new regulations, the Council should itself arrange for the recording of its meetings.

### 2. RECORDING OF THE COUNCIL'S PUBLIC MEETINGS

- 2.1 This Council has not traditionally recorded any of its meetings, although some local and other authorities such as the New Forest NPA, do. Others go a step further and webcast the proceedings.
- 2.2 Two options are available:  
  
Audio recording only; or  
Webcasting  
  
Either of the above could be achieved in the Council's main meeting rooms at Appletree Court, with additional equipment.
- 2.3 The meetings that attract the most public interest and attendance are the full Council, the Cabinet and the Planning Development Control Committee. All of these meetings are held in the Council Chamber. It might therefore be reasonable to provide recording facilities in the Council Chamber only initially and to consider extending the recording facilities to other rooms at a later stage.
- 2.4 The Council Chamber has a modern sound system and audio recording of proceedings would be relatively simple to achieve in that room. However, a hard drive recorder, with optional features such as searching, referencing, copying, etc would be required at a cost of approximately £7,000. Basic recording facilities in other meeting rooms would need microphones, speakers and amplifiers, with recorders, at a cost of approximately £14,000 per room. These are initial estimates only and surveys of all rooms by potential suppliers would be required.
- 2.5 Webcasting meetings has been investigated and could be provided through a managed service. A preliminary estimate of the cost is £18,000 per year, which includes the provision of the necessary equipment. However, the bandwidth capacity for satisfactory live-streaming of broadcasts is not available as there is no superfast broadband in Lyndhurst. The current upload speed is around 0.7Mbps

which would just meet the minimum requirement for live-streaming, but this is variable and can drop to a level which would cause the service to stop working intermittently. Superfast broadband should be available in Lyndhurst between January and June 2015.

- 2.6 The matter could be addressed earlier by the installation of a fixed line at a cost of approximately £2,200, with an annual rental charge in the region of £5,250. A fixed line would improve the current wi-fi capacity in the Council Chamber, but so should the arrival of superfast broadband in the first half of 2015.
- 2.7 A procurement process is likely to be necessary for webcasting.
- 2.8 Both the Freedom of Information and the Data Protection Acts will have implications for recording meetings. Any recordings the Council makes and retains would have to be made available on request under the Freedom of Information Act (subject to any applicable exemptions). The data protection issues could be dealt with by way of giving adequate fair processing notices to members of the public attending meetings.
- 2.9 In all the circumstances, it is suggested that the Cabinet agrees to the audio-recording of Council, Cabinet and Planning Development Control Committee meetings held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, and that further consideration be given at a later stage to:

Webcasting meetings; and  
Sound recording of meetings in other meeting rooms

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Equipment for audio-recording in the Council Chamber would cost approximately £7,000. Audio-recording in other meeting rooms would involve expenditure of approximately £14,000 per room.
- 3.2 Webcasting meetings held in the Council Chamber would cost in the region of £18,000 per annum, without any enhanced wi-fi facilities.

### **4. ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Webcasting meetings might result in fewer journeys by members of the public to attend meetings. Webcasts could also be of benefit to members of the public who have disabilities and would be able to view meetings at home.

## **5. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS**

In the interests of promoting the transparency of the Council's business, and in the light of recent changes to the legislation giving members of the public the right to record meetings, I support the proposal below.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 That meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and the Planning Development Control Committee held in the Council Chamber be recorded and that expenditure of approximately £7,000 be authorised for this purpose;
- 6.2 That further consideration be given at a later stage to webcasting meetings, and to recording meetings which the public are entitled to attend in other meeting rooms at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst.

### **Further information:**

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### **Background Papers**

None