

Dear Abigail Phillips

I have been asked to submit the views of Pembrokeshire County Council concerning the two petitions that have been put to the Petitions Committee.

1. Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

In common with most other Councils in the country, this Authority has not permitted the filming or recording of its meetings in any of the possible forms, photographing, filming, video recording, audio recording or by any other digital means. Whilst there are no specific provisions set out in the Council's Constitution regarding this issue, the Council has always had a general presumption against any form of such recording or broadcasting of any of its meetings.

The Council and other Authorities, have relied upon the provisions of Section 100A (7) of the Local Government Act 1972 [this having been inserted into the 1972 Act by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985] and which states:

- (7) Nothing in this section shall require a principal council to permit the taking of photographs of any proceedings, or the use by any means to enable persons not present to see or hear any proceedings (whether at the time or later), or the making of any oral report on the proceedings as they take place.

It has long been recognised that it is appropriate that a proper debate should be stimulated about matters being considered by local authorities. It is also clear that new technologies provide additional opportunities for this discussion.

However, it must be borne in mind that the internet is an almost wholly unregulated activity and there are significant and widely-held concerns about its use, particularly with blogs and comments made by anonymous individuals on, for instance, newspaper websites. While the use of social media can be very powerful and has enormous potential for good, it is open to serious abuse.

Modern equipment now makes it easier than ever for recordings, whether audio or video, to be edited in such a way as to misrepresent or take out of context comments made in a Council or Committee meeting. The Council does not make a verbatim record of proceedings and it is possible to foresee a situation where the Authority could be placed in a disadvantageous position in legal proceedings should an edited version of a Council or Committee debate be used to support a claim or complaint.

No Council in Wales currently has a policy which permits the recording or filming of meetings either by the public or press/media. All Councils, including this one, allow BBC Wales and ITV Wales to film Councillors in the Chamber preparing for meetings, but all require them to stop filming when the meeting starts. This is usually at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting. It would be inappropriate to permit a facility to members of the public that is denied to professional broadcasting organisations. The Welsh Government has not issued any advice or guidance on this subject.

The Council's Corporate Governance Committee recently considered the following Notice of Motion: "*That members of the public be allowed to film public Council meetings as long as they do not impede or obstruct proceedings*". The Committee approved a recommendation that Council be advised not to adopt the Notice of Motion. Council will be considering this recommendation in due course.

2. Local Authority Spending Details over £500

Yours sincerely,

Ben Pykett

Head of Policy and Performance
Pembrokeshire County Council

Ask for/Gofynnwch

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Tel/Ffôn

Direct Dial/Rhif

DX

E-Mail/E-Bost

Tracey Lee

TL/SLM

01633 656656

99463 Newport (Gwent) 3

Tracey.lee@newport.gov.uk



Civic Centre/Canolfan Ddinesig
Newport/Casnewydd
South Wales/De Cymru
NP20 4UR

Ms Abigail Phillips
Clerk to the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

12 October 2011

Dear Ms Phillips

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Further to your recent letter Newport City Council makes the following comments:-

1. **Filming & Recording Council Meetings**

Members have mixed views on the cost benefits of this.

In addition issues and implications in relation to unrestricted rights of the public to film meetings themselves and reuse material need to be considered.

Given the requirement in the Local Government Measure for remote access for Members to Council meetings it may be more appropriate to consider this matter alongside the necessary technology for that.

2. **Local Authority Spending Details over £500.**

Newport City Council has published details of spend over £500 for the last year and we would encourage others to do the same.

Yours sincerely

TRACEY LEE
Managing Director

cc **Councillor Matthew Evans Leader of the Council**
Councillor Mike Hamilton Deputy Leader of the Council



POLICE AUTHORITIES OF WALES
Submission to
Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales

1. Introduction

1.1 The Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales call for evidence regarding two petitions relating to local authority activities:

- i. The filming and recording of council meetings
- ii. Publishing local authorities spending details over £500.

1.2 Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) is a representative body of the four Police Authorities in Wales: Gwent Police Authority, Dyfed-Powys Police Authority, North Wales Police Authority and South Wales Police Authority. The main aims of PAW are to:

- Consider and act upon issues affecting policing in Wales, particularly those that are under the control of the National Assembly for Wales.
- Maintain a broad Welsh prospectus on police matters.
- Promote and protect the interests of member Authorities.
- Seek to influence the policing agenda at a national level on behalf of Police Authorities and local communities in Wales.
- Support Police Authorities in securing efficient and effective policing services across Wales.
- Enable Police Authorities to improve.
- Promote awareness of policing needs and the role and achievements of Police Authorities.
- Uphold and champion the principles of local accountability and policing by consent.

1.3 As an overview, Police Authorities have a statutory responsibility for:

- Ensuring the police provide an efficient and effective service.
- Setting the local policing priorities based on consultation with local people.
- Managing the police budget including setting the police part of the council tax in consultation with local people.
- Recruitment of the Chief Constable and the Chief Officers
- Monitoring police performance, holding the Chief Constable to account on behalf of the public.
- Ensuring that the Chief Constable delivers a police service that balances both national strategic priorities with the concerns of local people.
- Monitoring complaints against the police.
- Promoting equality and good relations between different groups of people. Informing people of their rights if they are stopped and searched by the police.

2. The filming and recording of council meetings

2.1 PAW can confirm that filming of police authority meetings currently takes place in a small number of English Authorities. However, this is not the position in Wales. Police authorities understand that this approach would help with both transparency and accountability but it is not something that authorities have budgeted for. Spending on this area of delivery before the demise of police authorities in November 2012 may not be seen to be in the interests of the community if similar requirements are not applicable to a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) as they would not be classed as a local authority. Clearly, this may be something that a PCC might want to consider in the future, however cost would still be an issue.

2.2 PAW does not believe that televised public meetings would be classed as an important priority at present due to the cost implications and would most likely sit in the in the desirable category of business. However, this may change with the introduction of the more public facing PCCs in 2012.

2.3 The barriers to public meetings being filmed would primarily be the cost which is not fully known. However, PAW has made some enquiries and there are a number of options depending on what level you wish to provide to and budget available. A number of options that we came across were:

- There are a number of free (supported by advertising) services that could be utilised. Avon and Somerset Police Authority which can be accessed on <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/9399720>
- There are dedicated streaming video solutions for 'live' meetings available with varying fees. This option may provide better value for money.
- Devon and Cornwall Police Authority televises their meetings and advised its quite costly:
 - Air time was purchased on an annual basis and costs vary;
 - Camera equipment has been leased at a cost of £20,000;
 - Sound equipment was arranged separately and 20 microphones cost approximately £6,000;
 - Their system is easy to use and could be utilised for consultation and interactive activities.

2.4 Another issue that would need to be considered is the skills and human resources required to establish televised meetings which again are not available in police authorities and therefore would need to be bought resulting in further cost implications.

2.5 A further consideration would be for authorities to look at the evidence that this is a widely sought after provision that our communities require. PAW is not aware of any previous public requests regarding police governance. PAW does not believe that the Welsh police authorities have provision for this activity in their Standing Orders. PAW reiterates that this position is likely to change with PCCs who will be looking to publicise their impact on policing in order to canvass votes.

2.6 In the event that televised meetings become the norm, we would take the same approach as the Welsh government and request all visitors to switch off mobile phones to prevent technological difficulties. If there is a statutory requirement on local authorities

to record and broadcast public meetings there is no need for duplication by members of the public. There is a risk that public recordings could be open to abuse.

- 2.7 PAW would reflect that local authority meetings being held in public are a business forum with clear decision making processes and would expect all members to be involved in the debate and business in hand. Therefore, it would be more beneficial for an officer to have the specific role of 'tweeting' during a meeting and would reduce biased representations of the meeting. It should be noted that all public meetings are open to the press for reporting and increased transparency.

3. Publishing local authorities spending details over £500.

- 3.1 Police Authorities of Wales would not support the motion to publish spending details for over £500. It would be an additional administrative burden and a time consuming exercise with cost implications which has no apparent benefit. We are not aware of any evidenced public demand for this provision.
- 3.2 There would be further complications in the area of police governance by the need to differentiate between confidential and covert matters which would result in limited transparency and undermine the purpose.
- 3.3 PAW believes that publishing spending details over £500 would not provide any additional information that is not already available via Freedom of Information requests.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Police Authorities of Wales is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the two petitions relating to local authority activities that has been put before the Petitions Committee of the National Assembly of Wales. PAW hopes that the response is helpful and informs the debate. PAW would be happy, however, to elaborate or provide further information which may be of benefit. Should this be required, first contact should be made

with the Police Authorities of Wales Executive Officer via the contact details below.

PAW Executive Support Officer
Maria Chapman
Police Authorities Wales
Gwent Police Authority Office
Police Headquarters
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP442XJ

TEL: 01633 647005
EMAIL: maria.chapman@gwent.pnn.police.uk

Response to Petitions Committee

Your letter dated September 2011 was discussed informally with the Council's Cabinet on 25 October 2011 and I have been asked to respond on their behalf.

Please note, I am not able to give evidence in person to the Committee.

1. Filming and Recording of Council meetings

The issue of webcasting Council meetings has previously been discussed by the Council. Whilst there may be some benefits to webcasting, e.g. improving accessibility to the Council, reaching a wider audience, etc., it was decided not to proceed because of the relative cost/benefit. The investment in the required technology was in itself prohibitive, but it did not take account of the additional staff needed to manage the real time elements within meetings and possibly any subsequent transcription and translation overheads. This, coupled with the predicted uptake figures (which were calculated by using information from another local authority that had introduced webcasting), suggested that we could expect in the region of 150 hits per month at a cost of £18,000+ per annum. Therefore, in the current financial climate when additional costs need to be avoided and with existing services being cut, there is little value to webcasting particularly as Council meetings are already open for the public to attend, if they so wish.

Our Rules of Procedure, as contained within the Constitution, state "No person other than the Council shall be entitled to make a video or audio recording or transmission of a meeting of the Council or its Committees."

2. Local Authority Spending Details over £500

Sian Williams
Democratic Services Manager
Conwy County Borough Council

Dymunai Cyngor Cymuned Trawsfynydd ddatgan nad yw'r Cyngor yn cytuno i fabwysiadu'r ceisiadau yn y ddwy ddeiseb sydd wedi eu cynnig sef:

Ffilmio a Recordio Cyfarfodydd Cyngor.

Manylion Gwariant dros £500 gan Awduddodau Lleol.

Teimlai'r Cyngorwyr fod pob Cyngor yn tryloyw yn barod gan fod aelodau o'r cyhoedd yn cael mynediad i wrando ar gyfarfodydd.

Mae'r drefn sydd yn bodoli'n barod yn ddigonol ag yn weithredol ers 1896.

Dim ond creu gweinyddiaeth a chost di angen byddai pleidleisio i ganiatau'r ddwy ddeisb yma.

Yn gywir

Ellen ap Dafydd
Cynorthwy-ydd Traws-Newid
Darparwyr Glerigol i Cyngor Cymuned Trawsfynydd

Trawsfynydd Community Council wishes to state that the council does not agree with adopting the proposals in the two petitions, regarding:

- filming and recording council meetings;
- details of spending by local authorities over £500.

The councillors feel that each council is already transparent as members of the public have access to meetings to listen to the discussions.

The existing procedure is sufficient and has been in place since 1896.

Voting in favour of the two petitions would only generate unnecessary administrative work and costs.

Yours sincerely

Ellen ap Dafydd
Traws-Newid Assistant
Providers of Clerical Support to Trawsfynydd Community Council

Date/Dyddiad:
Please ask for/Gofynnwch am:
Direct line/Llinell uniongyrchol:
Email/Ebost:

1st November 2011
Steve Thomas
029 2046 8610
steve.thomas@wlg.gov.uk



Abigail Phillips
Clerk to the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

WLGA • CLILC

Dear Abigail,

Re. Petitions:
Filming and Recording of Council Meetings
Local Authority Spending Details over £500

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the above petitions. The WLGA response is outlined below.

1. Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to place a statutory requirement on all local authorities in Wales to record, broadcast or livestream all Council meetings which are open to the public, via their existing websites to ensure openness and transparency. This requirement should allow members of the public, as responsible observers, to record or film such meetings without the need for prior permission and to re-use the material freely to provide a direct and wider line of communication to the electorate.'

Local authorities seek to promote openness, public engagement and transparency in undertaking their business. Whilst local authority meetings are clearly a central part of formal business, much of local authorities' ongoing democratic engagement is undertaken within communities by local councillors. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2012 also places new responsibilities on councils around publicity and public engagement, particularly around the role of scrutiny. Local authorities also undertake extensive ongoing public engagement and consultation and have developed innovative approaches to providing accessible and responsive information and service provision.

The WLGA would not however support a statutory requirement being placed on local authorities to record, broadcast or livestream all public council meetings without associated funding being made available by the Welsh Government. The costs of implementing such a statutory duty would require significant upfront and ongoing investment in ICT infrastructure and administrative and technical support. Whilst some authorities in Wales have considered webcasting council meetings

Steve Thomas CBE
Chief Executive
Prif Weithredwr

Welsh Local Government
Association
Local Government House
Drake Walk
CARDIFF CF10 4LG
Tel: 029 2046 8600
Fax: 029 2046 8601

Cymdeithas Llywodraeth
Leol Cymru
Tŷ Llywodraeth Leol
Rhodfa Drake
CAERDYDD CF10 4LG
Ffôn: 029 2046 8600
Ffacs: 029 2046 8601

www.wlga.gov.uk

(and Cardiff Council webcast its full council meetings), the cost implications, particularly in the current financial climate are a disincentive. Cardiff Council costs for webcasting its full council meetings per annum is reported at c£21,000, if this was replicated for all 'public' council meetings, the costs would rise significantly. Feedback from pilots in England also suggests that the impact and public usage of webcast council meetings has been limited.

Members of the public are generally not permitted to film or broadcast local authority meetings. Should local authorities decide to introduce webcasting of their own meetings, it is unlikely however that those restrictions on recording and broadcasting by the general public would be lifted. Local authorities adopt a similar approach to the filming and broadcasting of meetings by members of the public as the National Assembly for Wales and the Houses of Parliament, where recording from public galleries is not typically permitted. Similarly, mobile phone use is not permitted in public galleries of the National Assembly, UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament and in the Northern Ireland Assembly (where mobile phones have to be left outside of public galleries), due to interference and disruption to committee business and other members of the public and potential technological interference with equipment. There are wider issues about the consistency and reliability of any filming or broadcasting of council meetings by the general public as content may be edited, which could result in unintentional selectivity or vexatious distortion of a debate, a council decision or members' contributions.

2. Local Authority Spending Details over £500

'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to place a statutory requirement on all local authorities in Wales to publish details of all spending over £500 in the interest of openness and transparency. The details should be published online and in a format accessible to the public with the freedom to re-use the data. Many English Councils now publish this information on their websites. The information is already available on various internal council databases so would merely need to be collated centrally and in a form suitable for access and in compliance with the Data Protection Act. Initial costs would be offset by a reduction in the volume of Freedom of Information requests received by Local Authorities concerning spending details.'

The WLGA's understanding is that the Welsh Government has no intention of making this the publication of details of spending over £500 a statutory requirement, largely because of the bureaucracy involved in doing so. While the WLGA is supportive of the principle of transparency, it is not convinced that this is the most effective way of achieving it. As such, the WLGA is not supportive of making this a statutory requirement on local authorities and believes that this should remain a decision to be made by individual local authorities.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Thomas CBE
Chief Executive

Anya Richards
Uwch-Reolwr Cyfathrebu
Senior Communications Manager

County Hall / Neuadd y Sir,
Llandrindod Wells,
Powys
LD1 5LG

Abigail Phillips
Clerk to the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Tel / Ffôn: 01597 - 826082
Fax / Ffacs: 01597 - 826220
Date / Dyddiad: 07 November 2011

Dear Ms Phillips

Thank you for your letter dated September 2011 requesting the views of the local authority on two petitions under your consideration:

1. Filming and Recording of Council Meetings
2. Local Authority Spending Details over £500

Please find our responses below.

Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

Powys County Council welcomes the opportunities presented by digital media for increasing democracy and public involvement in the life of the council. The vast geographical expanse of Powys presents many challenges to citizens in engaging with the democratic process, and webcasting is a potential enabler for providing greater access to the democratic process.

In recent months the council has demonstrated this by way of a large screen public viewing at a Special Council meeting called to discuss TAN8, a policy which has received widespread public debate in Mid Wales. Around 1500 members of the public attended the live streamed event, and the response was very positive.

The council believes that any tool which enables increased democracy and engagement with the council is to be welcomed. At the same time, such tools are not inexpensive, and in a time of financial austerity it is essential all expenditure is justified and essential to the work of the council.

At the current time, we are not aware of calls from the residents of Powys for webcasting of council meetings.

In response to requests from councillors, we have, in recent months, began to look into solutions for web casting council meetings. Our initial undertakings highlight the following points:

- Many local councils throughout England are webcasting with some success and improved access to democracy (Bristol City Council is a good example)

- There are a number of off-the-shelf solutions that provide equipment and server space for web streaming
- Our Welsh language policy would mandate that for live web streaming, simultaneous translation would need to be provided, and Welsh and English streams set up (at additional cost).
- Staff – Extra staff would need to be employed to edit the video stream, and to translate the meeting.
- Which meetings? Just the council meeting, or cabinet too? If other meetings then would need some more portable kit for the extra meeting rooms, plus additional staff (editor and translator) if two meetings were taking place simultaneously.
- Accessibility - providing subtitles to a live web stream would require the services of a palantypist. A very expensive and scarce resource. It seems other councils are not providing this in their web streams. Would we fall foul of accessibility guidelines by not providing this service?

Our current standing orders do not allow recording (audio or visual) of council meetings without the express permission of the Chairman.

Local Authority Spending Details over £500

Powys County Council regards financial transparency to our publics and residents as highly important. At the same time, the resource required to publish such data is somewhat intensive, and in a time of financial austerity it is essential all expenditure is justified and essential to the work of the council.

Exploratory work has been undertaken to ascertain what level of resource would be required to publish all council spend over £500, and the following issues were uncovered:

- Much spending at this fairly low threshold includes payments to individuals, such as foster carers, school transport payments to parents etc
- The data cleansing exercise that would need to take place each month under current systems (in order to protect the identity of individual payee's) would be resource intensive
- legal issues around publishing competitively sensitive information is a concerning element
- All payee's would need to be informed that their details would be published
- All published information on our website is bilingual due to our Welsh Language Policy - extra staff resource would be needed to undertake the extra demand on translation services each month

Whilst the council fully supports the notion of financial transparency, it is also mindful of the burdensome, expensive process that will need to be undertaken in order to make the information publicly available.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this process

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Richards', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anya Richards
Senior Communications Manager

Dear Sir

I refer to your email below and would be grateful if you could forward the following responses to the Clerk of the Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales.

Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

The Webcasting of Council Meetings has been the subject of reports to Members at the following meetings and attached are the reports and minutes from each of those meetings.

Executive Board - 21 September 2010

Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee - 2 March 2011

Executive Board - 5 July 2011

Local Authority Spending Details over £500

Regards

Jane Johnson
Senior Committee Administrator
Wrexham County Borough Council

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON
TUESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2010

101 WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Chief Executive submitted a report (CE/10/10), containing information to assist Members in considering whether to instruct Officers to explore further the benefits and costs associated with the implementation of a webcasting system for Council meetings.

During the discussion, concerns were raised about the cost implications associated with the introduction of a webcasting system, but a number of Members considered it essential for Officers to investigate the matter further and to provide the Board with more information to assist it in coming to a decision.

RESOLVED – That the information contained in report CE/10/10 be noted and that Officers be authorised to investigate further the benefits and costs of implementing a webcasting system with a view to a further, more detailed report on the matter being prepared for the Board’s consideration.

Reason for decision

To ensure that Members fully understand the technical, legal and financial implications associated with the implementation of a webcasting system in order to assist the Board in making a fully informed decision on whether or not to introduce such a system.

REPORT TO:	Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee
REPORT OF:	Isobel Garner, Chief Executive
REPORT NO:	CE/02/11
DATE:	2 March 2011
CONTACT OFFICER:	Helen Odunaiya (292107)
SUBJECT:	Webcasting of Council Meetings

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Following a report to Executive Board on 21 September 2010 (CE/10/10), this report provides further information on the benefits and costs of implementing a webcasting system. Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider this information and make a recommendation to Executive Board as to whether or not to introduce this system.

2. SUMMARY

A webcast is an audio video transmission over the internet. Meetings may be viewed live, or from archive, through any internet connection. Cameras and an audio system at Council meetings would capture the live information and send it, via an encoder to anyone who would like to view the meeting.

Internet use in the UK continues to grow, and local authorities who have used webcasting have stated that it has enabled them to reach a wider audience. It has also been commented that the benefit of reaching a wider audience needs to be balanced with the costs of setting up and maintaining a webcasting system.

Wrexham County Borough Council does not currently have the appropriate infrastructure in place to be able to webcast. A leasing

arrangement would be the most cost effective solution to enable webcasting of meetings.

Additional financial and human resources would be required to support webcasting within the Council if Members determine that webcasting should take place and these have not yet been identified. The issue of dual languages also needs to be considered within the webcasting debate.

The Council's Constitution will need to be revised to enable filming to take place and a Usage Protocol will need to be developed.

In practical terms which meetings to webcast will need to be agreed as well as agreeing the locations of these meetings. Fixed seating arrangements will be needed for all webcast meetings.

A budget would need to be identified if Executive Board determines that webcasting should take place.

These decisions should also be considered in light of the proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure, which in its present form will give Councils a discretion to introduce remote attendance at meetings by Members, and in order to gain economies of scale it may be worth considering this project would be a suitable work stream for the joint collaborative work North Wales has embarked upon.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in this report, and make any recommendations to Executive Board on the issue of webcasting Council meetings.

4. INFORMATION

4.1 Background Information to this Report

A number of Members have requested consideration of webcasting of Council meetings as a means to improve the accessibility to meetings at Wrexham County Borough Council, and to increase the transparency of decision making. A report was taken to Executive Board on 21 September 2010 to provide members with sufficient information for them to decide if further research and consideration of webcasting of Council meetings is carried out. Executive Board agreed that further investigative work should be undertaken by Council officers and this report provides details of this further work.

4.2 Public Access to On Line Information

In 2010, 30.1 million adults in the UK (60%) accessed the internet every day or almost every day and internet users make up 76.4% of the population. Internet use is linked to various socio-economic and demographic indicators. For example, the majority of those aged 65 and over (60%) had never accessed the Internet, compared with just 1% of those aged 16 to 24. The UK's You Tube user base is

approximately 73% Male and 27% female. Videos and channels similar to Council webcasts tend to attract a near 80% male audience. Socially excluded groups are the least likely to access or benefit from information and communication technologies.

4.3 Experience of Other Local Authorities

Research highlights that the majority of local authorities who webcast meetings start with a pilot project for an agreed period of time (of about 12 months). For these authorities advantages include:

- Making meetings more accessible to the public
- Reaching a potentially wider audience
- Increasing transparency in decision making, thus increasing the accountability of decision makers to the electorate
- Presenting the organisation as modern and innovative
- Improving communication with the public
- Improving communication within the organisation
- Improving accessibility for those with special needs
- Helping reduce Member, officer and the public's travel time, costs and emissions as they may have attended in person
- For an issue with wide public appeal there is no restriction as to the number of people that can observe a meeting

Research shows that where local authorities have failed using webcasting is when they have embarked on much bigger projects and evaluation highlights that they have done too much too soon without having the experience, or capacity to make best use of the equipment.

Disadvantages cited have included:

- The experience of viewing the video does not provide the strong and important links back to the democratic function
- The costs of setting up such a system are high
- The viewing figures are low (eg Cornwall live viewing figures of their Council meeting show 1225 hits in the first month, and then 183 and 274 in the following two months).
- Webcasting does not achieve very much and the costs outweigh the benefits
- The follow up audience is limited as when content is in audio / visual format it is not picked up by Search Engines

4.4 Technical Implications

Currently Wrexham County Borough Council does not have the appropriate cameras, sound recording (outside of the Council Chamber) or web broadcasting equipment. Amongst the local authorities researched for the purpose of this report it was found that an external provider was used to lease the equipment and provided the hosting and streaming service for all authorities except one. (This

one authority had started webcasting in 2006 and therefore was amongst the first to undertake such an initiative).

There are several providers of a webcasting service across the UK including Westminster Digital, Media on Demand and Broadview. The main provider for local authorities is Public-i, currently used by around 50 other councils across the UK. For the purpose of this report Public-i was the only external provider consulted. However should Wrexham County Borough Council decide to adopt webcasting then a procurement process would need to be undertaken to deliver a short term pilot, and a full tendering process would need to be undertaken for any longer term contract following the Council's financial regulations.

4.5 Resource Implications

Current webcast users state that webcasting is resource intensive. This includes setting up the room and the cameras before a meeting; operating the cameras during the meeting; as well as transcribing, and working with webcasting providers on editing post production. Research indicates that the length of a meeting can be approximately tripled in terms of staff resource to support the filming of it.

A further issue to be considered is Welsh Language. Wrexham County Borough Council revised its Welsh Language Scheme in 2010. One of the tasks undertaken was to 'Review provision of simultaneous translation facilities at Full Council' and following a report to Council in September 2010 (COLL/12/10) it was agreed to offer simultaneous translation facilities at all Full Council meetings in the future. An external resource provides this service, and headsets are used for translation at such meetings. Post production editing would have to use this translation on the archive video. This would have additional resource implications.

Currently the only Welsh Local Authority to offer webcasting appears to be Cardiff. They do not provide a Welsh language version of meetings filmed. If a Welsh language version of meetings was required for archiving, the meeting would have to be transcribed in English and then translated into Welsh, either in a written or spoken format (or both) in 15 second intervals and uploaded onto the relevant video sections.

Appropriate resources would need to be identified if Executive Board decides that webcasting should take place.

4.6 Legal Implications

A change in the Constitution is required as this currently prohibits the broadcasting or recording of Council meetings. This change would need to approve only the official recording of the Council Meeting.

A Usage Protocol would need to be developed for filming and webcasting. The way the Council conducts its meetings and the way

Councillors behave during these meetings will be the same whether the meeting is being filmed or not. The Member Code of Conduct and other legal requirements relating to such things as defamation etc. will apply as now. The differences to protocol will be:

- The intention to webcast a meeting will need to be clearly identified for all attending (including public if appropriate)
- Members of the public attending the meeting must be informed that the meeting is going to be webcast and sign to acknowledge this. If they intend to raise a question but do not wish to be filmed then they cannot be filmed
- At the start of each meeting the Chair will have to announce that the meeting is being webcast and that the Chair may terminate or suspend the filming or webcasting of the meeting if he considers it desirable to maintain the proper running of the meeting. Details around suspension or termination will need to be developed.
- Other recording or broadcasting of the meeting will not be permitted without Council agreement.
- The Council's Monitoring Officer, or a deputy will be required to ensure that filming and / or recording of the meeting has ceased and will confirm this to the Chair of the meeting before any discussion of exempt or confidential matters commences.

Webcast meetings will be archived and Wrexham County Borough Council will need to agree how long online webcasts should be archived for.

4.7 Practical Implications

Wrexham County Borough Council will need to agree which meetings will be Webcast. The table in Appendix One shows the meetings that could be considered for filming (in hours) and Appendix Two highlights some combinations of meetings for consideration.

Cameras can be fixed or roaming. Fixed cameras can be used in the Council Chamber for Full Council. However the desks in the Council Chamber are moved for other meetings, so prior to the Full Council the desks must be positioned accurately, using floor markers, so that fixed cameras pick up an accurate picture of the room and the speakers. The existing audio system in the Council Chamber may be utilised (subject to site survey) but may require upgrading.

For Full Council meetings Councillors would have to sit in the same named seats for each meeting. This would enable online links highlighting Members names, wards and any other information required to be accurate.

Portable cameras and microphones could be used in Committee Room 3 for Executive Board or any other meeting room where meetings are to be webcast. Tripods, cameras and microphones would need to be set up prior to the start of the meeting and removed at the end.

4.8 Financial Implications

Based on the technical information in section 4.4 financial information is based on Wrexham County Borough Council undertaking a lease and hosting arrangement from a private company. The figures in this report are based on 2011 costs from speaking to Public-i only. Included in the equipment costs are charges for setting up of the fixed camera equipment, and training three to four members of staff on how to operate the equipment. Longer term leasing arrangements will include any upgrades of hardware and software so that the technology is future proofed.

The costs vary depending on the number of hours to be filmed per annum and according to the location of filming. The costs for filming in Council Chamber with four fixed cameras is listed below and there is an additional charge to add portable cameras (x2) and video cameras (x1) plus microphones, to enable filming to take place in any location.

Filming Time (in Hours per Annum)	Four fixed cameras in The Council Chamber	Council Chamber plus portable option
60	£17,945	£24,470
90	£19,195	£25,720
120	£20,445	£26,970
150	£21,695	£28,220
180	£22,945	£29,470
210	£24,195	£30,720
240	£25,445	£31,970
270	£26,695	£33,220
300	£27,945	£34,470
330	£29,195	£35,720
360	£30,445	£36,970

The prices in the table include the hosting, and streaming costs as well as the archiving of the webcasts for six months. If a Welsh language version of the webcast was required there would be an additional 10% charge to archive this. Similarly if archiving for more than six months was required there would be an additional cost. The cost of additional archiving would depend on the number of meetings to be archived and further costs would need to be sought.

If Wrexham County Borough Council were to enter into a longer term arrangement then discounts would be available, these have been quoted as 7.5% for 2 years, 15% for 3, 22.5% for 4 and 30% for 5 years.

If Wrexham County Borough Council were considering webcasting for less than sixty hours per annum then an alternative of four one off events per year could be considered. Public-i would provide all services (other than any Welsh translation) at a cost of £20k per annum plus accommodation and expenses.

A budget for these costs has not been identified and they must be considered together with the resource costs highlighted in section 4.5. The table in Appendix Three summarises costs, but does not include any archiving costs for more than 6 months.

4.9 Future Considerations

The Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure appears, at present, to give local authorities the discretion to introduce remote attendance of Members at meetings. The draft provisions require that the member(s) in remote attendance can see, hear, and be seen and heard by the members in actual attendance, as well as the public attending the meeting and any other members attending remotely. This current proposal does not enable those attending remotely to interactively engage in the meetings and further advice and costs would need to be sought to enable this to happen. It is likely that the only option for remote involvement would be a type of video conferencing facility. There are huge costs, as well as technical and legal implications to implementing the Measure’s draft proposals.

Webcasting may be an area Wrexham County Borough Council may wish to consider in conjunction with other North Wales Authorities as part of the Collaboration Agenda. Public-i have confirmed that economies of scale will exist for the project on a larger scale, particularly if equipment were to be shared across the local authority boundaries. Further costs would need to be assessed for a larger project such as this in conjunction with other local authorities across North Wales.

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Not applicable at this stage, however a full Equalities Impact Assessment would need to be undertaken if Executive Board determines that webcasting should take place.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Appropriate resources would need to be identified if Executive Board determines that webcasting should take place. A budget has not yet been identified but it would be significant ranging from approximately £19,000 pa to webcast Full Council only (£26,000 pa if a Welsh Language archive is included) to £50,300 pa for all meetings (£125,000 pa if Welsh Language archive is included). These figures are estimates only, as the cost will vary according to the actual length of meetings.

7. LEAD MEMBER COMMENT

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
CE/10/10 Webcasting of Council Meetings	Intranet	http://www.internal.wrexham.gov.uk/MinutesData/ExBoard/ex21092010a.htm

Appendix 1

Table Showing the Number of Meetings, and Length of Meetings held by Wrexham County Borough Council that could be considered for Webcasting.

Meeting	Frequency Per Annum (Estimated from 06.10 To 05.11)	Length (Planned time, actual may be longer)	Hours
Full Council	9	2 hours	18
Executive Board	24	3 hours	72
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	12	2 hours	24
Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee	12	2 hours	24
Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	16	2 hours	32
Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee*	11	2 hours	22
Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	18	2 hours	36
Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee **	3	2 hours	6
Planning Committee	22	2 hours	44
Environmental Licensing Committee	11	Majority of items dealt with in private session as Part II	
Licensing Committee	1	2 hrs (meets infrequently)	2
Totals	139		280

* This includes the Audit Committee which meets directly afterwards

** This a newly established Scrutiny Committee and the number of meetings may increase

Note: Very few meetings take place in August as this is the Member Recess.

Appendix 2

Table Showing some options (In Hours) for filming of various Council Meetings taking place at Wrexham County Borough Council

Meetings	Filming (Length in Hours) Per Annum
Full Council Only	18
Full Council & Executive Board	90
Full Council and Scrutiny Committees	162
Full Council, Executive Board & Scrutiny Committees	252
Full Council & Planning Committee	62
Full Council, Executive Board & Planning Committee	134
All Meetings	280

Appendix Three: Table showing Resource costs and Provider Costs for webcasting of various meeting options at WCBC

Meeting Options	Additional Welsh Language Costs									
	Basic Hours filming PA	Uplift in Hours for Additional 2 Extraordinary Meetings Per Annum (i)	Quoted costs from Provider for Hosting and Streaming (Per Annum)	Staff Resource (in Hours) Per Annum	Staff Resource Costs Per Annum to support Webcastin g (ii)	Total Basic Costs	Costs from Provider to Support Welsh Language Archive (Per Annum) (iii)	Staff Resource Costs & External Translation Costs to support Welsh Language Archive (iv)	Total Costs	
Full Council Only	18	4	£17,945.00	66	£1,021.02	£18,966.02	£1,794.50	£4,981.02	£25,741.54	
Full Council & Executive Board	90	4	£26,970.00	282	£4,362.54	£31,332.54	£2,697.00	£21,282.54	£55,312.08	
Full Council and Scrutiny Committees	162	30	£30,720.00	576	£8,910.72	£39,630.72	£3,072.00	£43,470.72	£86,173.44	
Full Council, Executive Board & Scrutiny Committees	234	30	£33,220.00	792	£12,252.24	£45,472.24	£3,322.00	£59,772.24	£108,566.48	
Full Council & Planning Committee	64	8	£25,720.00	216	£3,341.52	£29,061.52	£2,572.00	£16,301.52	£47,935.04	
Full Council, Executive Board & Planning Committee	136	8	£28,220.00	432	£6,683.04	£34,903.04	£2,822.00	£32,603.04	£70,328.08	
All Meetings	280	34	£35,720.00	942	£14,572.74	£50,292.74	£3,572.00	£71,092.74	£124,957.48	

(i) Historically there have been up to 2 additional (Extraordinary) meetings per annum (Excluding Executive Board)

(ii) Resource costs are based on the salary scale of a Committee Officer (level), plus on costs, and length of meeting x 3

(iii) Provider costs only include 6 months archiving, therefore this figure will be higher if archives are to be kept for longer

(iv) Costs are based on staff time to transcript the meeting and then translation costs at £60 per hour to convert into a Welsh transcript

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
REPORT NO:	CE/03/11
DATE:	5 July 2011
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Rodney Skelland Regeneration and Corporate Governance
LEAD OFFICER:	Head of Corporate and Customer Services
CONTACT OFFICER:	Helen Odunaiya (Tel: 292107)
SUBJECT:	Webcasting of Council Meetings
WARD:	N/A

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Following a report to Executive Board on 21 September 2010 (CE/10/10), this report provides further information on the benefits and costs of implementing a webcasting system. Executive Board is asked to consider this information and decide on the next steps.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 A webcast is an audio video transmission over the internet. Meetings may be viewed live, or from archive, through any internet connection. Specialist cameras and an audio system at Council meetings would be required to capture the live information and send it, via an encoder to anyone who would like to view the meeting.
- 2.2 Internet use in the UK continues to grow, and local authorities who have used webcasting have stated anecdotally that it has enabled them to reach a wider audience. However, the benefit of reaching a wider audience needs to be balanced against the costs of setting up and maintaining a webcasting system for the sorts of numbers of viewers it is likely to support.
- 2.3 Wrexham County Borough Council does not currently have the appropriate infrastructure in place to be able to webcast. A leasing arrangement is likely

to be the most cost effective delivery mechanism to enable webcasting of meetings.

- 2.4 There would be both budget and human resources implications to support webcasting within the Council if Members determine that webcasting should take place. The exact costs have yet to be identified but depending on the number of meetings to be webcast could be between £31,000 per annum (to webcast Full Council and Executive Board) to almost £125,000 per annum (to web cast all meetings). The issue of bi-lingual transmission also needs to be considered within the webcasting debate.
- 2.5 The Council's Constitution will require revisions to enable filming to take place and a Usage Protocol will need to be developed.
- 2.6 In practical terms which meetings to webcast will need to be agreed as well as agreeing the locations of these meetings. Fixed seating arrangements will be needed for all webcast meetings.
- 2.7 A budget would need to be identified if Executive Board determines that webcasting should take place. This budget will vary according to the number of meetings to be webcast, the location and the length of the meetings, how long the archive was to be kept for, and whether Welsh translation is offered..
- 2.8 Importantly any decision needs to be considered in light of the new Local Government (Wales) Measure, which appears to give Councils a discretion to introduce remote attendance at meetings by Members, and it is understood that the Minister is considering running such facilities in pilot authorities before rolling out any more comprehensive requirement. It may also be preferable to await the results of those pilots to avoid abortive costs. Also, in order to gain economies of scale, if the Council wishes to commence in the short term it may be worth considering whether this project would be a suitable work stream for the joint collaborative work North Wales has embarked upon.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended at present that webcasting will not offer any clear benefits for Wrexham County Borough Council to outweigh the significant costs generated. Webcasting should therefore be put on hold until at least the pilots to be carried out on remote attendance at meetings as part of the Local Government (Wales) Measure have been implemented and evaluated.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to a request from Members for further information on webcasting of meetings.

Trevor Coxon
Head of Corporate and Customer Services

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 A number of Members have requested consideration of webcasting of Council meetings as a means to improve the accessibility to meetings at Wrexham County Borough Council, and to increase the transparency of decision making. A report was taken to Executive Board on 21 September 2010 to provide members with sufficient information for them to decide if further research and consideration of webcasting of Council meetings is carried out. Executive Board agreed that further investigative work, up to a maximum of forty hours, should be undertaken by Council officers and this report provides details of this further work. The work to date has in fact taken in excess of 60 hours.

Public Access to On Line Information

4.2 In 2010, 30.1 million adults in the UK (60%) accessed the internet every day or almost every day and internet users make up 76.4% of the population. Internet use is linked to various socio-economic and demographic indicators. For example, the majority of those aged 65 and over (60%) had never accessed the Internet, compared with just 1% of those aged 16 to 24. The UK's You Tube user base is approximately 73% Male and 27% female. Videos and channels similar to Council webcasts tend to attract a near 80% male audience. Socially excluded groups are the least likely to access or benefit from information and communication technologies.

Experience of Other Local Authorities

4.3 Research highlights that the majority of local authorities who webcast meetings start with a pilot project for an agreed period of time (of about 12 months). For these authorities advantages have included:

- Making meetings more accessible to the public
- Potential to reach a wider audience
- Increasing transparency in decision making, thus increasing the accountability of decision makers to the electorate
- Presenting the organisation as modern and innovative
- Improving communication with the public
- Improving communication within the organisation
- Improving accessibility for those with special needs
- Helping reduce Member, officer and the public's travel time, costs and emissions as they may have attended in person
- For an issue with wide public appeal there is no restriction as to the number of people that can observe a meeting

4.4 Research shows that where local authorities have failed using webcasting is when they have embarked on overly ambitious projects and evaluation highlights that they have done too much too soon without having the experience, or capacity to make best use of the equipment.

4.5 Disadvantages cited have included:

- The experience of viewing the video does not provide the strong and important links back to the democratic function

- The costs of setting up such systems are high
- The viewing figures are low. For example Cornwall live viewing figures of their Council meeting show 1225 hits in the first month, and then 183 and 274 in the following two months. This desktop research has found it very difficult to get specific viewing figures from both providers and Local Authorities using webcasting, it does however appear to be low unless there is a very specific issue being discussed, eg Bristol City Council cite figures of over 5,000 live viewers during their planning meeting for a new football stadium. This however is an exception to the regular viewing stats.
- Webcasting does not achieve very much and the costs outweigh the benefits
- The follow up audience is limited as when content is in audio / visual format it is not picked up by Search Engines

Technical Implications

- 4.6 Currently Wrexham County Borough Council does not have the appropriate cameras, sound recording (outside of the Council Chamber) or web broadcasting equipment. Amongst the local authorities researched for the purpose of this report it was found that an external provider was used to lease the equipment and it provides the hosting and streaming service for all authorities except one. (This one authority had started webcasting in 2006 and therefore was amongst the first to undertake such an initiative).
- 4.7 There are several providers of a webcasting service across the UK. For the purpose of this report a main provider for local authorities, currently used by around 50 other councils across the UK, was the only external provider consulted in order to give an idea of cost. However should Wrexham County Borough Council decide to adopt webcasting then a procurement process would need to be undertaken to deliver, it is recommended, a short term pilot, and a full tendering process would need to be undertaken for any longer term contract following the Council's financial regulations.

Resource Implications

- 4.8 Current webcast users state that webcasting is resource intensive. This includes setting up the room and the cameras before a meeting; operating the cameras during the meeting; as well as transcribing, and working with webcasting providers on editing post production. Research indicates that the length of a meeting can be approximately tripled in terms of staff resource to support the filming of it.
- 4.9 A further issue to be considered is Welsh Language translation. Wrexham County Borough Council revised its Welsh Language Scheme in 2010. One of the issues addressed was to 'Review provision of simultaneous translation facilities at Full Council' and following a report to Council in September 2010 (COLL/12/10) it was agreed to offer simultaneous translation facilities at all Full Council meetings in the future. An external resource provides this service, and headsets are used for translation at such meetings. Post production editing would have to use this translation on the archive video. This would have additional resource implications.

- 4.10 Currently the only Welsh Local Authority to offer webcasting of Council Meetings is Cardiff. They do not provide a Welsh language version of meetings filmed. If a Welsh language version of meetings was required for archiving, the meeting would have to be transcribed in English and then translated into Welsh, either in a written or spoken format (or both) in 15 second intervals and uploaded onto the relevant video sections.
- 4.11 Appropriate resources would need to be identified if Executive Board decides that webcasting should take place. The identified resources will necessarily detract from other priorities that the Council has already identified.

Legal Implications

- 4.12 A change in the Constitution is required as this currently prohibits the broadcasting or recording of Council meetings. This change would need to approve only the official recording of the Council Meeting thus controlling any unauthorised third party recording.
- 4.13 A Usage Protocol would need to be developed for filming and webcasting. The way the Council conducts its meetings and the way Councillors operate during these meetings will be the same whether the meeting is being filmed or not. The Member Code of Conduct and other legal requirements relating to such things as defamation etc. will apply as now. A sample of the content of a draft protocol is highlighted below:
- The intention to webcast a meeting will need to be clearly identified for all attending (including public if appropriate).
 - Members of the public attending the meeting must be informed that the meeting is going to be webcast and sign to acknowledge this. If they intend to raise a question but do not wish to be filmed then they cannot be filmed.
 - At the start of each meeting the Chair will have to announce that the meeting is being webcast and that the Chair may terminate or suspend the filming or webcasting of the meeting if he considers it desirable to maintain the proper running of the meeting. Details around suspension or termination will need to be developed.
 - Other recording or broadcasting of the meeting will not be permitted without Council agreement.
 - The Council's Monitoring Officer, or a deputy will be required to ensure that filming and / or recording of the meeting has ceased and will confirm this to the Chair of the meeting before any discussion of exempt or confidential matters commences.
- 4.14 Webcast meetings will be archived and Wrexham County Borough Council will need to agree how long online webcasts should be archived for.
- 4.15 The webcast material cannot legally replace the formal written minutes as a record of decision making.

Practical Implications

- 4.16 Wrexham County Borough Council will need to agree which meetings will be Webcast. The table in Appendix One shows the meetings that could be considered for filming (in hours) and Appendix Two highlights some combinations of meetings for consideration.
- 4.17 Cameras can be fixed or roaming. Fixed cameras can be used in the Council Chamber for Full Council. However the desks in the Council Chamber are moved for other meetings, so prior to the Full Council the desks would have to be positioned carefully, using floor markers, so that fixed cameras pick up an accurate picture of the room and the speakers. The existing audio system in the Council Chamber may be utilised (subject to site survey) but may require upgrading.
- 4.18 For Full Council meetings Councillors would have to sit in the same named seats for each meeting. This would enable online links highlighting Members names, wards and any other information required to be accurate.
- 4.19 It may be possible for portable cameras and microphones to be used in Committee Room 3 for Executive Board or any other meeting room where meetings are to be webcast. Tripods, cameras and microphones would need to be set up prior to the start of the meeting and removed at the end although this could appear quite cluttered.

Financial Implications

- 4.20 Based on the technical information in section 4.4 financial information is based on Wrexham County Borough Council undertaking a lease and hosting arrangement from a private company. The figures in this report are based on 2011 costs from speaking to one provider only. Included in the equipment costs are charges for setting up of the fixed camera equipment, and training three to four members of staff on how to operate the equipment. Longer term leasing arrangements will include any upgrades of hardware and software so that the technology is future proofed.
- 4.20 The costs vary depending on the number of hours to be filmed per annum and according to the location of filming. One provider has quoted their costs for filming in Council Chamber with fixed cameras and there is an additional charge to add portable cameras, video cameras and microphones, to enable filming to take place in any location.
- 4.21 From the one provider asked prices include hosting, and streaming costs as well as the archiving of the webcasts for six months. If a Welsh language version of the webcast was required there would be an additional 10% charge to archive this. Similarly if archiving for more than six months was required there would be an additional cost. The cost of additional archiving would depend on the number of meetings to be archived and further costs would need to be sought.

4.22 If Wrexham County Borough Council were to enter into a longer term arrangement then the provider has stated that they can offer discounts. These have been quoted as 7.5% for 2 years, 15% for 3, 22.5% for 4 and 30% for 5 years although the longer any arrangement is entered into the less flexibility for change would be.

4.23 A budget for these costs has not been identified and they must be considered together with the resource costs highlighted in section 4.5. The table in Appendix 3 summarises costs, but does not include any archiving costs for more than 6 months.

Future Considerations

4.25 The new Local Government (Wales) Measure appears, at present, to give local authorities the discretion to introduce remote attendance of Members at meetings although it is understood that the Welsh Government wishes to pilot such a facility in selected authorities before rolling this out more generally. The draft provisions require that the member(s) in remote attendance can see, hear, and be seen and heard by the members in actual attendance, as well as the public attending the meeting and any other members attending remotely. The current proposal for webcasting contained in this report does not enable those attending remotely to engage interactively in the meetings and further advice and costs would need to be sought to enable this to happen. It is likely that the only option for remote involvement would be a type of video conferencing facility. There are significant costs, as well as technical and legal implications to implementing the Measure's proposals.

4.26 Webcasting may be an area Wrexham County Borough Council may wish to consider in collaboration with other North Wales Authorities as part of the Collaboration Agenda. The provider spoken to for the purpose of this report has confirmed that economies of scale will exist for the project on a larger scale, particularly if equipment were to be shared across the local authority boundaries. Further costs would need to be assessed for a larger project such as this in conjunction with other local authorities across North Wales.

4 CONSULTATION

The Head of Corporate and Customer Services and the previous Chief Information Systems Officer and current Web Manager have been consulted in the preparation of this report. The issue has also been discussed by Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee (see section 6 below).

6. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Corporate Governance and Policy Scrutiny Committee discussed this report at their meeting on 2 March 2011. It was agreed to recommend to Executive Board that the issue be deferred pending the outcome of the Local Government (Wales) Measure. This is in view of the draft provision for local authorities to introduce remote attendance of Members at meetings. It was commented that after this time issues to be considered should include that whether the Executive Board may be the most appropriate meeting to

webcast; further viewing figures should be examined, particularly from Cardiff, the other Welsh Authority who currently webcast; and once there is more clarity around the Local Government (Wales) Measure it may be appropriate to consider this on a North Wales basis.

7. IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 **Policy Framework** – Webcasting would impact on the External Communications Strategy that is currently being revised.
- 7.2 **Budget** – the budget for this project has not yet been identified but it could be significant. The costs would range depending on the number of meetings to be webcast, the length of those meetings, whether Welsh translation was required, and the length of time the archives would be kept for. There is no budget for webcasting in the current year’s existing cash limited budget. Responsibility for webcasting would lie within Corporate and Customer Services and webcasting would become a budget pressure for the department.
- 7.3 **Legal** – the constitution would need to be changed and a usage protocol developed.
- 7.4 **Risks** – there is a reputational risk if the usage protocol was not followed or if equipment did not function correctly.
- 7.5 **Equalities** - an Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for this proposal. Webcasting will have an impact on age, disability, gender, and if translation offered, Welsh Language. Further work and consultation with relevant groups and organisations to look at these issues in more detail will need to be undertaken before webcasting could be introduced. The EIA assessment highlights: Older people do not access the web as readily as younger residents do, and therefore webcasting will not improve accessibility for them. Similarly elderly residents have a greater fear of crime and may not attend evening meetings for this reason, webcasting will not improve this situation. In terms of gender, males access the web more than females and therefore webcasting would have a greater impact on males than females. In terms of disability, webcasting could positively impact on residents with a physical disability, who if wishing to attend a Council meeting will have the opportunity to watch the meeting from home (subject to the correct broadband coverage, computer and skill). We are unable to estimate the numbers this would affect, but it is likely to be very low. However for residents with a sensory or learning disability in the same situation, webcasting will not make a difference to them. If the Welsh language element of webcasting is adopted this would not meet the requirements of the Council’s third language, British Sign Language.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
CE/10/10 Webcasting of Council Meetings	Intranet	http://www.internal.wrexham.gov.uk/MinutesData/ExBoar d/ex21092010a.htm

Appendix I

Table Showing the Number of Meetings, and Approximate Length of Meetings held by Wrexham County Borough Council that could be considered for Webcasting.

Meeting	Frequency Per Annum (Estimated from 06.10 To 05.11)	Length (Planned time, actual may be longer)	Hours
Full Council	9	2 hours	18
Executive Board	24	3 hours	72
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	12	2 hours	24
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Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	16	2 hours	32
Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee*	11	2 hours	22
Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	18	2 hours	36
Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee **	3	2 hours	6
Planning Committee	22	2 hours	44
Environmental Licensing Committee	11	Majority of items dealt with in private session as Part II	
Licensing Committee	1	2 hrs (meets infrequently)	2
Totals	139		280

* This includes the Audit Committee which meets directly afterwards

** This a newly established Scrutiny Committee and the number of meetings may increase

Note: Very few meetings take place in August as this is the Member Recess.

Appendix 2

Table Showing some options (In Hours) for filming of various Council Meetings taking place at Wrexham County Borough Council

Meetings	Filming (Length in Hours) Per Annum
Full Council Only	18
Full Council & Executive Board	90
Full Council and Scrutiny Committees	162
Full Council, Executive Board & Scrutiny Committees	252
Full Council & Planning Committee	62
Full Council, Executive Board & Planning Committee	134
All Meetings	280

Appendix Three: Table showing Approximate costs (Resource and Provider) for webcasting of various meeting options at WCBC

Meeting Options	Basic Hours filming PA	Uplift in Hours for Additional 2 Extraordinary Meetings Per Annum (i)	Staff Resource (in Hours) Per Annum	Total Basic Costs	Additional Welsh Language Costs		
					Costs from Provider to Support Welsh Language Archive (Per Annum) (iii)	Staff Resource Costs & External Translation Costs to support Welsh Language Archive (iv)	Total Costs
Full Council Only	18	4	66	£18,966.02	£1,794.50	£4,981.02	£25,741.54
Full Council & Executive Board	90	4	282	£31,332.54	£2,697.00	£21,282.54	£55,312.08
Full Council and Scrutiny Committees	162	30	576	£39,630.72	£3,072.00	£43,470.72	£86,173.44
Full Council, Executive Board & Scrutiny Committees	234	30	792	£45,472.24	£3,322.00	£59,772.24	£108,566.48
Full Council & Planning Committee	64	8	216	£29,061.52	£2,572.00	£16,301.52	£47,935.04
Full Council, Executive Board & Planning Committee	136	8	432	£34,903.04	£2,822.00	£32,603.04	£70,328.08
All Meetings	280	34	942	£50,292.74	£3,572.00	£71,092.74	£124,957.48

- (i) Historically there have been up to 2 additional (Extraordinary) meetings per annum (Excluding Executive Board)
- (ii) Resource costs are based on the salary scale of a Committee Officer (level), plus on costs, and length of meeting x 3
- (iii) Provider costs only include 6 months archiving, therefore this figure will be higher if archives are to be kept for longer
- (iv) Costs are based on staff time to transcript the meeting and then translation costs at £60 per hour to convert into a Welsh transcript

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
REPORT NO:	CE/10/10
DATE:	21 September 2010
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Rodney Skelland (Regeneration and Corporate Governance)
LEAD OFFICER:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Kate Adamson (Tel: 292266)
SUBJECT:	Webcasting of Council Meetings
WARD:	N/A

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide Members with sufficient information for them to decide if further research and consideration of webcasting of Council meetings is carried out. The Plaid Cymru group has requested consideration of Webcasting as a means to improve the accessibility of meetings at Wrexham County Borough Council and to increase the transparency of decision making.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 A webcast is an audio video transmission over the internet. Meetings may be viewed live, or from archive, through any internet connection. Video cameras at Council meetings would capture the live information and send it, via a provider (such as public-i) to anyone that would like to view the meeting.

2.2 Webcasting can be seen as a way to increase the transparency of decision-making by creating greater opportunities for members of the public to view the debate. There may be any number of reasons that make it difficult for members of the public to attend the Guildhall to watch meetings and therefore the availability of webcasting allows any individual to choose to watch a live internet broadcast of the meeting from any internet location such as home, or library; or they may look back at discussions that have already taken place by accessing an on-line archive of previous webcasts.

2.3 The main provider of webcasting services to the public sector, Public-i, host all but two of the 50 plus UK local authorities currently webcasting. The costs of providing this service via Public-i vary according to how many hours broadcasting per month are required – in 2009 they ranged from £16,500 to £19,000 per annum.

2.4 In order to further research the options and associated costs of webcasting, a small group of officers from the Information Systems and Legal and Democratic Services departments would need to undertake further research.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That the Board notes the information contained in this report and decides whether to allocate officer time to further investigate the benefits and costs of implementing a Webcasting system.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the Council to fully understand the technical, legal and financial implications of implementing a Webcasting system in order to make a fully informed decision on whether or not to introduce webcasting.

Isobel Garner
Chief Executive

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 Many councils cite improving openness, understanding and accountability of decision making as key reasons for webcasting meetings.

4.2 There are currently more than 50 councils including Bristol, Cardiff, Cheshire West and Chester, Lancashire and Derby City Councils, who use webcasting to increase access to council meetings. The vast majority of these councils use 'Public-i' to host their broadcasts but other providers, such as 'Westminster Digital' are also available.

4.3 The webcasting system can:

- Enable direct live audio-visual access to the decision making process of local authorities at a time convenient to the user i.e. if someone cannot make a meeting on an issue of concern they can follow the debate live as it happens or, from the archived record at any time afterwards.
- Improve access to meetings for those unable to attend in person, either because of disability or other restrictions.
- Provide contextual information (through pop up slides, biographies etc.) which may not usually be available to the visitor to a meeting.
- Be useful in clarifying minutes or any misunderstanding arising during a meeting that is webcast.
- Be a potential vehicle for the Council to promote its activities, as some local authorities have demonstrated by creative use of the webcast (examples include Youth Councils, involving schools in live polling, and promotional information on boroughs/authorities).

- Improve engagement by linking to a feedback forum allowing members of the public to give immediate feedback on their reaction to a webcast discussion.

- 4.4 Wrexham Council does not currently have the equipment to record / broadcast meetings (appropriate Video Camera(s), sound recording, web broadcasting equipment).
- 4.5 The costs of providing this service via Public-i vary according to how many hours broadcasting per month are required. The company lease the equipment to councils and typical annual costs, associated with a fixed camera installation (e.g. Council Chamber) for a single language version are £16,500pa to include up to 5hrs broadcast time per month or £19,000pa for up to 10hrs per month (as at March 2009). Broadcast time is based on 'live' meetings, and once broadcasted, meetings remain available for a period of time in archive form. Additional costs include capacity for the on-going operation and management of the system.
- 4.6 Given that all meetings are conducted in English, with the exception of Council which can be bi-lingual, there may be a potential requirement to ensure Welsh and English broadcasts. Therefore as part of the research proposed, consideration would need to be given to whether they would need to be bi-lingual.
- 4.7 We would need to investigate whether or not sub-titles and/or signing would be required, either for live broadcasts (not realistic) or perhaps more realistically for delayed broadcasts, from an accessibility and inclusivity perspective.
- 4.8 Additionally, the Council's current standing orders state that: 'Proceedings at meetings may not be photographed, videoed, sound recorded or transmitted in any way outside the meeting without prior permission of the Chair. Failure to comply with this Standing Order may invoke Standing Orders 14 and 15 relating to Disorderly Conduct and Disturbance by members of the public.' This would allow the transmission if approved by the Chair, therefore if webcasting were to take place this standing order would require/amending deletion.

4.9 Next steps

In order to investigate this issue further, a small group consisting of representatives from IS, Legal and other services, could be established to undertake more detailed research (from a technical and non-technical point of view), to:

- Identify and assess options available, including consideration of different providers.
- Consider which meetings should/could be broadcast in order to determine the number of hours required monthly.
- Obtain the details of the experiences of other local authorities.
- Investigate the potential cost involved in setting up and running broadcasting of council meetings.
- Assess the technical implications of offering such a service.
- Assess the legal implications of offering such a service.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Not applicable at this stage.

6. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

6.1 This report has not been submitted to any scrutiny committee.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 **Policy Framework** – there are no policy implications in this report.

7.2 **Budget** – there are no budget implications in this report. Any budget implications are considered as part of specific project work.

7.3 **Legal** – there are no legal implications in this report. However there will be legal implications if this project is to be implemented.

7.4 **Risks** – there are no risk implications in this report. Any risk assessments are carried out as part of specific project work.

7.5 **Equalities** - impact assessments will be carried out as part of specific project work.

7.6 **Staffing** – to carry out the research officer time will be needed and this might require reprioritisation of time

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
N/A		

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
AND POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, WREXHAM
ON WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 2011**

61 WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

With reference to Minute 101, Executive Board, the Chief Executive submitted a report, (CE/02/11S), to provide further information on the benefits and costs of implementing a webcasting system.

In introducing the report on behalf of the Chief Executive, the Principal Performance and Improvement Officer reported that currently the Council did not have the appropriate infrastructure in place to webcast. She reported findings of research undertaken to date which highlighted that the majority of local authorities who webcast meetings started with a 'pilot' project. She reported that the advantages cited by local authorities included meetings becoming more accessible to the public and increased transparency in decision making, whilst the disadvantages cited included the significant costs of setting up a system and low viewing figures. Amongst the local authorities researched, it was found that an external provider was used to lease the equipment and provided the hosting and streaming service.

The Principal Performance and Improvement Officer reported that there were several providers of a webcasting service across the UK and that the main provider for local authorities is Public-i currently used by about 50 Councils. The practical implications of webcasting Council meetings were submitted at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report. A table illustrating potential resource costs and provider costs for webcasting of various Council meetings was submitted at Appendix 3 to the report. The Committee was informed that the estimated cost of 18 hours of filming Full Council meetings was £19k, with an additional £7k for a Welsh transcript. Resource and provider costs for webcasting all Council meetings, including Scrutiny Committees involving 280 hours filming was estimated to be in the region of £50k, with an additional £75k to convert into a Welsh transcript.

During discussion of the report, Members and Officers commented as follows:-

- Concerns that there was insufficient information in the report to make an informed recommendation, as only one external provider, namely Public-i was consulted and there had been investigation of only one local authority, namely Cornwall. Further investigation should be carried out into indicative costs of external specialist providers; examination of a cheaper method of archiving and consultation with other local authorities, particularly Cardiff.
- A view of some Members that greater transparency and democratic accountability would improve public perception of how the Council operates.
- Acknowledged that engagement with the public was paramount but there were concerns that viewing figures would be low and that a wide audience would not be reached. Further research required into this issue.
- The benefits of reaching a wider audience needs to be balanced against the costs of setting up and maintaining a webcasting system.

- A suggestion that initially a 'pilot' scheme of webcasting the Executive Board be implemented over a 12 month period, without Welsh transcript, in view of the Council's limited resources.
- The importance of engagement with young people and the need to explore interactivity with schools in the County Borough via webcasting of some Council meetings, as part of the school curriculum.
- Webcasting could be an area the Council may wish to consider as part of the Collaboration Agenda with other North Wales Authorities in the future in order to provide a more cost effective scheme.

The comments of the Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer were noted in respect of the potential implications of the Local Government (Wales) Measure which may require local authorities to introduce remote attendance of Members at meetings and resultant resource implications. In the circumstances, he suggested that Members exercise caution pending WAG's requirements.

Whilst some Members considered that webcasting should be agreed in principle and that subject to further investigations a 'pilot' scheme be initiated, other Members were of the view that the issue should be re-considered following the implementation of the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

AGREED:- To recommend to the Executive Board that this issue be deferred pending the outcome of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON
TUESDAY, 5 JULY 2011

46 WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

With reference to Minute 101 of the Board (21 September 2010), the Head of Corporate and Customer Services submitted a report (CE/03/11), containing further information on the benefits and costs of implementing a webcasting system.

In discussing the matter, Members made particular reference to the cost implications of implementing a webcasting system at this time.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That it be accepted that, at present, webcasting will not offer any clear benefits for the Council that would outweigh the significant set-up costs associated with the implementation of such a system.**
- (ii) That further consideration of the matter be deferred pending a report on the pilot projects to be carried out on remote attendance at meetings as part of the Local Government (Wales) Measure.**

Reason for decision

Webcasting will not offer any clear benefits for the Council that would outweigh the significant set-up costs involved.

Swansea Access For Everyone

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*Working towards an accessible environment for everyone in the City
and County of Swansea*

26/10/2011

Dear Madam,

Please find attached our group's views on two petitions

1. Filming and Recording of Council Meetings
2. Local Authority Spending Details of over £500

A member of our group would be willing to give evidence in person.

Yours faithfully,

B. Campbell
(Brendan Campbell)
Joint Secretary

1. Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to place a statutory requirement on all local authorities in Wales to record, broadcast or livestream all Council meetings which are open to the public, via their existing websites to ensure openness and transparency. This requirement should allow members of the public, as responsible observers, to record or film such meetings without the need for prior permission and to re-use the material freely to provide a direct and wider line of communication to the electorate'.

Questions you may wish to consider in responding

1. Do you feel that public meetings should be filmed? Why is this important?
2. What are the barriers to public meetings being filmed?
3. Do any of the Standing Orders of Wales's local authorities specifically prohibit the filming of public meetings?

Yes public meetings should be filmed. This will allow full participation and access to council business by all. At the moment in the City and County of Swansea the public gallery in the council chamber is not accessible to disabled people and is unlikely to be made accessible due to the nature of the building. This in effect means that disabled people are discriminated against and are denied their democratic right to see how their elected representatives conduct their business. Filming would go some way to addressing this discrimination.

If the meetings are open to the public there should be no barriers to filming.

I don't know if Standing Orders for Wales's local authorities specifically prohibit the filming of meetings, but if they do they should be changed.

2. Local Authority Spending Details over £500

'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to place a statutory requirement on all local authorities in Wales to publish details of all spending over £500 in the interest of openness and transparency. The details should be published online and in a format accessible to the public with the freedom

to re-use the data.

Many English Councils now publish this information on their websites. The information is already available on various internal council databases so would merely need to be collated centrally and in a form suitable for access and in compliance with the Data Protection Act.. Initial costs would be offset by a reduction in the volume of Freedom of Information requests received by Local Authorities concerning spending details.'

Questions you may wish to consider in responding

1. Do you feel that local authorities should publish details of spending? If so, should this be mandatory or encouraged as best practice?
2. What are the barriers to providing this information publicly?
3. Do you feel that £500 and over is the appropriate level of spend to be published.

Yes we feel these details should be published on websites and in formats accessible to all.

No barriers can be seen to providing this information.

Details of spends of lesser amounts should be considered.

Ask for/Gofynnwch

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Tel/Ffôn

Direct Dial/Rhif

DX

E-Mail/E-Bost

Tracey Lee
TL/SLM

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~NP20 4UR Newport (United Kingdom)~~

~~Tracey.lee@newport.gov.uk~~



Civic Centre/Canolfan Ddinesig
Newport/Casnewydd
South Wales/De Cymru
NP20 4UR

Ms Abigail Phillips
Clerk to the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

12 October 2011

Dear Ms Phillips

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Further to your recent letter Newport City Council makes the following comments:-

1. **Filming & Recording Council Meetings**

Members have mixed views on the cost benefits of this.

In addition issues and implications in relation to unrestricted rights of the public to film meetings themselves and reuse material need to be considered.

Given the requirement in the Local Government Measure for remote access for Members to Council meetings it may be more appropriate to consider this matter alongside the necessary technology for that.

2. **Local Authority Spending Details over £500.**

Newport City Council has published details of spend over £500 for the last year and we would encourage others to do the same.

Yours sincerely

TRACEY LEE
Managing Director

cc **Councillor Matthew Evans Leader of the Council**
Councillor Mike Hamilton Deputy Leader of the Council