

DIGITAL INNOVATION AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

Item No.....

Report title:	Video streaming proposals for future NCC Cabinet Meetings
Date of meeting:	23 January 2019
Responsible Chief Officer:	Executive Directors of Finance and Commercial Services and Strategy and Governance
<p>Strategic impact: The Council has resolved to move from the current Committee system to an Executive system of Governance from May 2019. Livestreaming meetings will ensure the Council continues to be accountable to its residents and stakeholders.</p> <p>If Members wish to pursue this option, it is suggested that any livestreaming is to be piloted with the key decision-making bodies of the new structure (Council and Cabinet) with effect from the new governance in May 2019 and reviewed fully before Members consider any possible further rollout.</p>	

Executive summary

A number of Council's webcast their meetings. Norfolk County Council does not currently do so, but since 2011 has posted audio recordings of County Council meetings on its website. During the Cabinet Working Group's deliberations, the issue of webcasting was raised, and the Working Group asked that it be investigated. This report summarises the work undertaken by Officers and asks Members to provide a steer on the preferred way forward.

Recommendation:

To consider the information set out in the report and in the presentation to be given by officers at the meeting and provide a steer to Officers on the preferred way forward.

1. Proposal

- 1.1 It has been suggested that providing live streaming of council proceedings grants citizens immediate access to the Council's decision making and enables a greater number of people to get involved. Following Member discussions in various fora, Officers have been considering possible options for webcasting meetings if Members wish to proceed. The proposals set out in this report would be for a pilot period and are suggested to apply to Cabinet and County Council meetings in order that Members may undertake a full assessment before any decision to roll out further is taken
- 1.2 If the Authority wishes to video broadcast meetings live on the Internet, it is suggested that the YouTube webcam service is explored as a first step. That would still give us flexibility to investigate hosted services in future.

- 1.3. Broadcasts would take place from one of two rooms. In the pilot period the Council Chamber could broadcast Full Council meetings approx. 6 times a year and the Edwards Room broadcast Cabinet meetings) approximately 12 times per annum.
- 1.4 A procurement would be required for the camera and associated equipment required to capture the meetings, zoom and highlight current speakers, integrate with microphone systems where required and format the video for a final output that can be streamed live to YouTube.

Council Chamber

- 1.5 Any solution would require the procurement of 3 cameras for the Council Chamber, each with pan-tilt-zoom capability, one each side of the Chair's platform to capture Members in the "horseshoe area", and one at the rear of the Council Chamber facing the Chair, capturing the Chairman those Members at the "top table" seated either side. Alternative camera suggestions could also be considered. The microphone system will interface with the cameras to allow them to focus on the speaker. Any cameras provided will need to operate within the current light levels in the Council Chamber. It is anticipated the main lights will be on during the County Council meetings, but no additional lighting is required. A member of Democratic Services staff would attend all Full Council Meetings to control the broadcast.

Edwards Room

- 1.6 Due to the layout of the room, it would require only two fixed cameras, without a zoom or pan facility. The two cameras could sit either side on the wall as you come into the room directing towards the projector screen end. This would be the best option to direct the cameras away from the public seating area. Both images would be combined into the video feed to ensure all Members can be seen. It is accepted that the feed from any single one of the cameras will show the back of some of the seated Members, but between the two displayed feeds at least a side or front view of all Members can be presented. It is not intended to have staff monitoring meetings in this room, they will set up the broadcast at the start of the meeting and return at the end to shut down. Options will be considered as to whether the fixed cameras can provide sufficient audio for the broadcast, or whether an integration into the Bosch microphone system is possible and desirable.

2. Evidence

- 2.1 Officers will make a presentation to the meeting to demonstrate how the proposal could work in order for Members to make a fully informed decision.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Soft market testing indicates the initial purchase cost of the camera system for two rooms to be between £10,000 - £20,000 as a one-off capital cost. There is

no requirement to incur a revenue-based hosting system at this stage. It is assumed that the existing RCF-9000 microphone system in the Council Chamber can support the “zoom to speaker” function for the camera system and will not need replacing as part of this project, however this assumption has not been tested. If this is not technically possible, options include replacing the microphone system (potential £100,000 cost) or sacrifice the “zoom to speaker” facility.

4.0 Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1 Further work including developing protocols to support the practical elements such as implications for the public attending meetings will be undertaken if Members wish to pursue the pilot.

5. Background

- 5.1 In 2011, the Council agreed to post sound recordings of full Council meetings on its website. Since 2014, regulations have been in force allowing members of the public to film, photograph or make sound recordings of proceedings at public council meetings. This is reflected in the Council’s constitution and exercised from time to time. Prior to this, the permission of the Council was required. The following motion to Council in April 2018 moved by Councillor Rowntree was lost by 45 votes to 28.

“With the expansion of reliable broadband links Council believes it is now appropriate to live stream full council meetings and to improve public access to the proceedings at council committee meetings. Council therefore resolves to:

1. begin live web streaming of full Council meetings from the Annual Meeting in May 2018
2. make audio recordings of main Council committee meetings that will be available to the public on request from May 2018
3. request Policy and Resources Committee to include arrangements for streaming of all main Council and committee meetings in any proposals for a return to a cabinet system
4. request Policy & Resources Committee to make the necessary funds available to implement this decision”.

- 5.2 The issue of livestreaming was subsequently raised in the Cabinet Working Group who asked for the issue to be investigated. At Council on 10 December 2018, in response to a question, the Chairman replied that he was happy for the topic to be added to the Committee’s Forward Plan for discussion at this meeting. This report sets out the results of Officer consideration and seeks a steer from Members on the preferred way forward.

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