

Democracy Committee

8 February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Webcasting Service Update

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and Communications and Sam Bailey, Interim Democratic Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the update on resolving problems with the webcasting service; and
2. Identify any further action that should be taken in relation to issues with the webcasting

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: Our Corporate Priorities outline the Council's ongoing commitment to the residents of Maidstone. Ensuring that the Council is accountability, transparent and above all involving residents in its decision making. Providing a webcasting service that has the ability to engage with residents is key to this.

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy Committee	8 February 2017

Webcasting Service Update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has webcast its Committee meetings since July 2007 as a means of ensuring accountability, transparency and increasing understanding of local decision making.
 - 1.2 In June 2016, following a successful procurement and tendering process the Council changed webcasting providers. The contract was awarded to Public-i. As part of the new contract the microphones were renewed as the previous units were no longer serviceable. The installation of the new system took place in September 2016.
 - 1.3 Since the installation of the system, after a period of the system working properly a number of problems occurred. Since the Interim Democratic Services Manager was appointed he has been working with Public-I to find solutions to, and resolve, the problems identified.
 - 1.4 Due to the ongoing problems, members requested an update on the progress made on resolving them.
-

2. ISSUES

- 2.1 Following installation there have been some technical issues, some of which have been resolved and others that are in the process of being resolved.
- 2.2 The issues that have been resolved include:
 - Failure to broadcast the Policy and Resources meeting of 3 January 2017. This was rectified in time for the next meeting (Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 10 January 2017).
 - Poor quality, jerky video, with a bad frame rate. This was solved by Public-i turning down the resolution.
 - The Democratic Services iPad, which is used to control the system during meetings, would not connect to the webcasting system. This was resolved when Public-i conducted a site visit.
- 2.3 There are a number of issues that are still outstanding and solutions have been identified for. They include:
 - The presentation screens do not work or flicker when a signal is sent to them. We have identified that the converters, which convert the VGA (analogue) signal in the cabling to the HDMI (digital) input for the screens, are scrambling the signal. An improved converter will be ordered that we can control manually, which should resolve the problem.

- There is interference from lighting in the town hall, which causes moving horizontal lines to appear through the picture. We are awaiting a quote from an electrician to change the lighting at the Town Hall to LED lighting, which should resolve this problem.
- Microphones cut out, or don't turn on, occasionally. Democratic Services will monitor which microphones this is happening to and make a note of their serial numbers. Public-I will then test these microphones to see whether it is an issue with individual microphones. They will also send an engineer to test the wifi reception in the town hall to check whether there is any interference affecting the signal.
- Members recently raised an issue with the volume of the webcast. Although this was raised before, the team thought it had been fixed. We will work with Public-I to find the source of the problem and resolve it.

2.4 The Interim Democratic Services Manager has been in regular contact with the account manager and technical support team at Public-i. This has ensured that solutions have been found for the problems that have been identified.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Members can choose to receive this update on webcasting problems.
- 3.2 Members can choose not to receive an update on webcasting problems.
- 3.3 Members can identify any appropriate action that needs to be taken on webcasting.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred options are 3.1 and 3.3 – if members receive the update they will be able to identify what, if any, appropriate action is required to improve the service.
- 4.2 If members choose option 3.2, they will not be aware of the progress that has been made to resolve the current issues with the webcasting service.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 No next steps are required – this report is for information for members only.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Our Corporate Priorities outline the Council's ongoing commitment to the residents of Maidstone. Ensuring that the Council is accountability, transparent and above all involving residents in its decision making. Providing a webcasting service that has the ability to engage with residents is key to this.	Head of Policy and Communications
Risk Management		Head of Policy and Communications
Financial	No financial implications identified.	Head of Policy and Communications
Staffing	N/A	Head of Policy and Communications
Legal	The new webcasting microsite and use of voting system will aid the Council in meeting the transparency requirements. The Constitution will need to be amended to reflect any change to voting.	Interim Deputy Head of Legal
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	No detrimental impact on the needs of those with protected characteristics identified.	Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development		[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety		[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act		[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement		[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management		[Head of Service &

		Manager]
--	--	----------

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None