

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

6 February 2025

Notice of Motion – Broadcasting and Recording Equipment

Report of: Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer

Report Reference No: CPC/44/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Decision or Scrutiny: Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 Following a Notice of Motion submitted to Full Council at its meeting on [16 October 2024](#), this report provides options for improving the quality of live streaming audio / video at Committee and Full Council meetings.

Executive Summary

- 2 On 16 October 2024, Councillor L Wardlaw submitted the following Notice of Motion to Full Council:
 - (a) ‘Will this Council commit to improving its broadcasting and recording equipment in the interest of openness, fairness and a wider access to democracy. It is now over a year since Cheshire East Council has been made aware of the poor sound quality of its broadcasts and recordings, and yet the problem remains unresolved. The recurrent failure of its live broadcasting and the delays in recordings being available is unacceptable. We have made a commitment to deliver this service to our residents, but we fail at every meeting held. The situation is anti-democratic, unprofessional, and unacceptable. Democracy is not well served when it cannot be easily accessed. The current service is inadequate. An improved offer is needed, and I ask that this be considered as a priority’.

- 3 On occasions, there have been issues with temperamental equipment and acoustics in meeting rooms, which has led to poor quality recordings of committee meetings, resulting in those listening to the meetings remotely, struggling to hear the committee debate and vote. However, every effort is given to ensuring that a back-up recording is available. This report provides options available to address these issues.
- 4 It should be noted that there is no statutory requirement for Councils to broadcast their Committee or Full Council meetings in audio or visual format, and given current budget pressures, consideration should be given as to whether the improvements suggested are considered as essential spend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider whether the Council should implement any of the measures, as outlined within the report in paragraph 10, to improve the quality of recording of public meetings.
2. Subject to the resolution of recommendation 1, approve that the Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to proceed with required procurement and contractual processes to achieve the wishes of the Corporate Policy Committee.

Background

- 5 Historically there have been issues with the quality of a minority of audio recordings at Committee meetings held in Westfields, Crewe Municipal Buildings, Macclesfield Town Hall, and Full Council meetings held in Macclesfield Town Hall.
- 6 In the future, the majority of Committee meetings will be held in the new Committee Suite at Delamere House. The new Committee Suite once developed, will be Microsoft Teams enabled, and all meetings will be video streamed in this way, which will significantly improve the quality of recordings.
- 7 As part of the MTFS, Full Council agreed at its meeting held on [27 February 2024](#), in relation to the cost of democracy, that meetings should be held in Council owned buildings, and since the closure of

Westfields alternative venues have been sought for Committee meetings.

- 8 Due to the poor acoustics in the Assembly Rooms at Macclesfield Town Hall, recent Full Council meetings have been held at Jodrell Bank. However, this is not a permanent solution as it is not a Council-owned building (as above) and is not easily accessible via public transport. Similarly, the acoustics for meetings held in the Capesthorne Room, Macclesfield, have been poor. Poor room acoustics detrimentally impact the quality of meeting recordings to some extent, but there is no easy or inexpensive solution to this.
- 9 In order to address the above issues at Full Council meetings, arrangements have been put in place to allow members of the public to view and to participate in Council meetings from Delamere House, Crewe, and from Macclesfield Town Hall.
- 10 Quotes have been received from companies specialising in council audio and video broadcasting:

| | Quote 1 | Quote 2 | Quote 3 | Quote 4 |
|-------|---|--|---|---|
| Scope | To install Microsoft Teams enabled equipment in the Capesthorne Room in Macclesfield Town Hall for Committee meetings. | <p>To install live video streaming equipment in the Assembly Room in Macclesfield Town Hall for Full Council meetings.</p> <p>And</p> <p>To install live video streaming equipment in the Capesthorne Room in Macclesfield Town Hall for</p> | <p>To install live streaming equipment through Microsoft Teams enabled equipment, plus enhanced features in the Assembly Room in Macclesfield Town Hall for Full Council meetings.</p> <p>And</p> <p>To install live streaming equipment through Microsoft</p> | To install Microsoft Teams enabled equipment in the Assembly Room in Macclesfield Town Hall for Full Council meetings. |

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|------|-----------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| | | Committee meetings. | Teams enabled equipment in the Capesthorne Room in Macclesfield Town Hall for Committee meetings. | |
| Cost | Approximately £90,000 | Approximately £89,000 over a 5-year period | Approximately £155,000 | Approximately £114,000 |

- 11 In readiness for the potential change in legislation relating to virtual attendance at meetings, the software in quotes 3 and 4 will provide the Council with the ability to facilitate this.
- 12 Members are asked to consider whether, in light of the Council's current budget pressures, they wish to progress with any of the options provided above.
- 13 Alternatively, the Council could continue with existing arrangements or choose to not broadcast its meetings at all.

Consultation and Engagement

- 14 No consultation has taken place.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 15 Full Council resolved that this matter be considered by the Corporate Policy Committee.

Other Options Considered

| Option | Impact | Risk |
|---|---|---|
| Do nothing and accept the limitations of the current technology used. | Potential criticism of the Council not being Open and Transparent | Poor recording of Council and Committee meetings. |

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

16. There is no statutory requirement for public meetings to be broadcast. The requirement is for public access.
17. The new Committee Suite once developed, will be Microsoft Teams enabled, and all meetings held in this room will be video streamed in this way.
18. Meetings will still take place in the Capesthorne and Assembly Rooms in Macclesfield, and what is being proposed is additional to the currently programmed improvements and so it not within current budget provision. Any decision to implement new measures will need to be funded which will mean identifying savings or an increase in base budget.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 19 There is no revenue budget available to meet the cost of these proposals, if agreed to proceed, a one-off pressure of up to £155,000 will be placed on the council budget, and would require an adjustment to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Policy

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| An open and enabling organisation |
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| Open and transparent |
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 21 Improvements to the broadcasting of meetings would assist all residents accessing and contributing to the democratic process of the Council.

Human Resources

- 22 None

Risk Management

- 23 To do nothing, the Council would need to accept the limitations of the current facilities.

Rural Communities

- 24 Improvements to the broadcasting of meetings would assist those residents living in rural communities in accessing and contributing to the democratic process of the Council.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 25 None

Public Health

- 26 None

Climate Change

- 27 Improvements to the broadcasting of meetings would assist all residents accessing and contributing to the democratic process of the Council remotely and therefore reducing the need to travel.

| Access to Information | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Contact Officer: | Brian Reed – Head of Democratic Services Brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk |
| Appendices: | None |
| Background Papers: | None |