

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 10 April 2018

Replacement audio visual system in the Council chamber

Accountable member	Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Roger Whyborn
Accountable officer	Director of Corporate Resources, Mark Sheldon
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>For some time there have been intermittent problems with the sound system in the Council Chamber which has caused difficulties in public meetings and there is a widespread view amongst councillors and some of the public that it is not fit for purpose. There are limitations of the current equipment which is now over 12 years old and no longer manufactured and it is not cost effective to carry out anything other than ad hoc repairs as required.</p> <p>A project was set up in September 2017 to consider the options for replacing the system and a Cabinet Member working group was set up to help define the priorities. The project aims to replace the current audio system in the Council Chamber, and add additional options dependent on costings, and business case, as well as to prioritise compliance with the requirement to provide 'assistive listening'.</p> <p>The requirements were put out to tender in January this year and a preferred supplier was chosen on the basis of cost and quality.</p> <p>In February 2018 Council allocated a sum of up to £75,000 to be earmarked for this expenditure and it is now coming back to Cabinet to approve the final purchase. The proposed expenditure and rationale for the options chosen are set out in this report.</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) That the essential and desirable items listed in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 are purchased by Cheltenham Borough Council within a total cost of £66,000.2) That a sum of £5000 is provisioned for maintenance and support of the system over a 5 year period as follows: i) £1000 for 2018/19 from the £75K allocated for the capital expenditure ii) in subsequent years it is proposed to increase the current Municipal Offices maintenance budget by £1000 p.a to cover this either through a transfer from existing budgets or a growth bid.3) That the remaining £8K from the £75 K allocated is retained during 2018/19 for additional unforeseen costs and contingencies that may arise during the implementation,

and/or later enhancements to be authorised by the Head of Property Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member Corporate Services.

<p>Financial implications</p>	<p>The initial costs of £67,000 for the purchase of the equipment and first year's maintenance costs will be funded from the 2018/19 capital budget of £75,000 approved by Council at the budget setting meeting on 19 February 2018. The balance of £8,000 will be used for further equipment or additional associated costs in 2018/19 or carried forward for use in future years.</p> <p>Annual maintenance costs of £1,000 per annum for the financial year 2019/20 onwards will be included as growth to the council's revenue base budget, subject to approval by Council as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process</p> <p>Contact officer: Sarah Didcote, sarah.didcote@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264125</p>
<p>Legal implications</p>	<p>Tenders within budget and not exceeding £100,000 can be accepted by an authorised officer. The form of contract must be approved by the Council Solicitor in accordance with the Contract Rules.</p> <p>The data protection aspects of the new system will need to be fully considered prior to implementation. This should include a retention policy (which will also be relevant to managing information in a freedom of information context).</p> <p>Contact officer: Peter Lewis, peter.lewis@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01242</p>
<p>HR implications (including learning and organisational development)</p>	<p>There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.</p> <p>Julie McCarthy (HR Manager – Publica Group)</p> <p>Julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel: 01452 264355</p>
<p>Key risks</p>	<p>The key risk is that the current sound system may fail at any time and therefore reduce the accessibility and effectiveness of council meetings for Members, officers and the public.</p> <p>See Risk Assessment in Appendix 1 for other risks.</p>
<p>Corporate and community plan Implications</p>	<p>Supports the following ambition in the Corporate Plan and the project is listed as an action for completion in 2018.</p> <p><i>The council's customers will have access to services in a way that is modern, easy and convenient for them.</i></p>
<p>Environmental and climate change implications</p>	<p>No specific implications identified</p>

Property/Asset Implications	<p>Due to the age and condition of the existing AV system, replacement is recommended and we further endorse including any technological improvements to assist Democratic Services future operational needs; Property Services have been fully involved with the specification and procurement of a new AV system throughout and confirm the specification has engendered 'future-proofing' the new system as far as is practicable.</p> <p>Contact officer: Garrie Dowling, Senior Capital Projects Surveyor garrie.dowling@cheltenham.gov.uk 01242 264394</p>
ICT Implications	<p>The Public Wifi available in the Council chamber will not provide access to locally connected equipment for presentation purposes so other alternatives will need to be investigated.</p> <p>Tony:Skipp ICT Support Team Leader</p>
Strategy and Engagement implications	<p>There will be some work for the communications team to set up the social media links but this can be done as part of Business as usual and will not require any additional resources.</p> <p>Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager Richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 235354</p>

Background

- 1.1 For some time there have been intermittent problems with the sound system in the Council Chamber which has caused difficulties in public meetings and there is a perception by some councillors and the public that it is not fit for purpose. There are limitations of the current equipment which is now over 12 years old and no longer manufactured and it is not cost effective to carry out anything other than ad hoc repairs as required. The sound system is regularly checked as part of a maintenance contract but there is no in house expertise to fix ad hoc problems when they arise during a meeting.
- 1.2 In or before 2023 the new office accommodation at Delta Place will become available for council staff and will include a flexible space for council meetings. There is also the possibility of a move to temporary office accommodation before then. It is very likely that the current sound system would need to be replaced before that date so it is not advisable to defer a decision on a new system until any move.
- 1.3 The Cabinet Member Corporate Services has requested that any solution **should be practical, affordable and portable** and thus set up a Cabinet Member Working Group in September 2017. The Cabinet Member had requested initial estimates of the cost of the various options so that they could be fed into the budget discussions. The Cabinet Member also requested solutions which are owned by CBC and which therefore avoid significant revenue cost implications. In February 2018 Council allocated a sum of up to £75,000 to be earmarked for this expenditure. The project aims to replace the current audio system in the Council Chamber, and add additional options dependent on costings, timings and business case.
- 1.4 In view of the planned relocation of the council from the Municipal Offices it is an essential requirement that any new equipment is easily transferable to the new location without incurring significant extra cost. However there would always be a degree of fixed installation costs as part of any package so these would have to be taken into account if the council moved from the Municipal building within the life of any contract.
- 1.5 Consideration was also given to extending the system to the Pittville Room to enable similar facilities to be provided for Cabinet, Member Seminars and other public meetings with similar flexibility in any new accommodation. Initially this was felt to be a lower priority but more recently there have been significant sound problems in the Pittville Room and hence this is now being considered as an essential requirement.

2. Investigations and consultations

2.1 The working group

The Cabinet Member invited interested Members to join a working group and this consisted of Councillors Clucas, Harman, Lillywhite, Payne and Parsons and was chaired by the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Roger Whyborn. They were supported by the Democratic Services Manager and the Senior Capital Projects Surveyor. After tabling a briefing note to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February, the Cabinet Member extended an invitation to other members of the O&S committee and Councillors Mason and Walklett joined the working group at their final meeting before this report.

Priority setting

- 2.2 For its initial deliberations a number of priorities had been tabled at the working group, and subsequently modified after discussions to produce the following lists:

2.3 Facilities which were deemed “Essential”

- Base system which is entirely reliable - as portable as possible.

- 52 Individual delegate microphones, probably wireless to ensure portability
- Must be bought outright, with only minimal ongoing revenue.
- Capable of easy operation by officers who are not technical engineers
- A compatible 'hearing loop' system with ability to deal with exempt business whilst not compromising confidentiality or alternative technology achieving the same or better result.
- 20 Individual delegate (could be wireless) microphones for Pittville room with appropriate controls.

2.4 Facilities which were “Desirable”

The working group felt any of the following features could be added if Members believed they represented good value for money.

- Audio and video to an overflow room. (Audio from the Council Chamber is already available to the Pittville room).
- Audio and video recording capabilities – can be via Facebook, YouTube etc.
- In conjunction with the above a capability to find items on the agenda
- Audio and Video cameras enabled for live online broadcast
- Digital voting system, if Members believe this adds value.
- Consideration given to above being linked to the modern.gov system for ease of access to the appropriate part of the meeting. At minimum we needed to know what sort of links need to be embedded into the system in order for access by councillors, staff and the public.

2.5 The working group was generally agreed on the “Essential” items as listed in para 2.3, but views very much more mixed regarding the “Desirable” items at 2.4 ; the audio recording of meetings was a high priority, along with digital voting for some Members but not for others. Webcasting and video was initially felt to be a fairly low priority, whether for overflow or for web/recording purposes.

2.6 Wider soundings were also taken, and accordingly Cabinet Members were minded to raise the priority for webcasting, particularly in recognising the potential for this media to reach hitherto unreached groups, especially those who are not politically engaged, either via live streaming or recordings.. There is the further potential to make this facility available at an appropriate cost for outside groups who use the council chamber. Cabinet Members were less convinced about the value added by digital voting, and noted that although it was an available option at the County Council, Members there had not opted to take this up.

Other councils

2.7 In the course of investigations, officers and some members, either visited, or spoke to other councils at Gloucestershire County Council, Exeter City, Stroud and Forest of Dean. This was very informative in understanding the range of options available and costs.

2.8 At the county council they have invested in a dual microphone wireless system with a fully hosted web casting system and presentation system. Members of the working group were demonstrated the system and shown how the microphones were charged in between meetings in a special equipment cupboard. Members noted that a fully hosted web casting system would incur an annual revenue cost of between £10 and £15 K depending on the number of meeting hours.

2.9 A visit to Stroud demonstrated an alternative wired system with self-hosted web casting in a fixed but flexible meeting space and full presentation facilities. ”

2.10 The Cabinet Member and officers held a conference call meeting with Exeter City who provide a live and recorded streaming of their council meetings to YouTube. This followed their earlier e-mail response which read:
“We find that we never really have more than 15-20 people watching a broadcast at once

when it's a committee meeting but after a few days, the viewing figures are generally around 2000 views. Which for a couple of hours of my time is a pretty good return I think. We live streamed a Scrutiny Committee on the 9th Nov which has currently had 1.6k views here:
An extraordinary meeting of the Council on the 12th Oct has now had more than 6,000 views....
Another extraordinary meeting was held on the 19th July which has now had about 8.6k views.”

See <https://www.facebook.com/ExeterCityCouncil/videos>

- 2.11 Officers advised that the initial outlay had been for a single stand-alone camera which was operated by their communications team.
- 2.12 It was observed that Exeter City had been very successful in reaching residents through social media, but there were limitations with a single camera, also concerns to provide the service in a more resilient and less labour intensive way. We wanted to explore whether an enhanced facility could be provided at a reasonable cost by the main system supplier. What was clearly demonstrated however was the importance in regarding this as a good communication tool, and the value of accessibility of the broadcasts via social media, rather than relying on more traditional platforms.

3. The tender process and evaluation

- 3.1 An invitation to tender (ITT) was therefore prepared on the basis of the essential and desirable items set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4. put out to tender during January on the council's procurement portal. Several suppliers visited the Municipal Offices to inform their tender submission and speak to the officers involved.
- 3.2 The supplier submissions were evaluated using a process whereby each supplier was given a score out of 45 for their quote for the essential items and a score out of 55 for the quality of their response to 8 questions. The listed items for pricing by suppliers and the cost and quality ratings are shown at Appendix 2. The suppliers were also asked to provide a quote for the desirable items which could potentially be added on at a later date once the chosen supplier had been selected.
- 3.3 The tender process was conducted by a panel of officers and VP Bastion was the successful bidder. The results are commercially sensitive but are attached in an exempt Appendix 3.
- 3.4 In discussion with VP Bastion it became clear that additional savings could be made by having dual shared microphones where appropriate. This proposal was thus incorporated.
- 3.5 A further meeting of the Cabinet Member Working Group was convened on the 12 March to seek their views on the priorities in the light of the quoted costs to enable the proposals to be finalised in this Cabinet report. The resulting priorities are formalised in the recommendations in section 4 together with the rationale and any alternatives considered.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 On the basis of the quotes received It is recommended that the following “essential” items are purchased by Cheltenham Borough Council once any final contractual items with the successful tenderer are completed. The contract price will include all preliminary work and project management as specified in the tender and will be in the order of £65K. There is also an additional £1000 required for the council to provide an additional monitor for the Mayor and a high spec operator PC for the democratic services officer bringing the total to £66K.

- A wired Bosch sound system to the Council Chamber with 1 chair's microphone, 8 single and 24 dual units
- A wireless system for the Pittville room with 1 chair's microphone and 8 dual delegate units
- 'Assistive Listening' for the Council Chamber and Public Gallery
- The AV presentation system
- CBC to purchase a high spec operator PC and 1 repeater screen for the Mayor
- 5 year maintenance contract from the supplier

4.2 It is recommended that the following "desirable" items are purchased by Cheltenham Borough Council:

- Entry-level single camera with pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ) audio & visual webcasting facility and with streaming and recording to social media.
- 2 additional cameras, as per supplier's proposal.
- Some additional facilities to ensure support for the 'desirable' items, together with basic links to modern.gov, and the ability to put agenda item details and the like into the streamed output.
- A new speech timer.

4.3 It is recommended that any remaining sum is retained to support any unforeseen expenditure during the implementation and/or any other AV related items as are required in the future. This could include implementing Member id software to enable the speaker to be identified by name using an ID card facility, digital voting or enhancing the web casting facilities. It is noted that the capital sum allocated by Council in the budget was for 2018/19 and therefore a carry forward request would have to be agreed in order for this to be carried forward to any future years.

5. Rationale for recommendations and alternative options considered

5.1 Wired versus Wireless systems

At first wireless systems were felt to offer more flexibility and particularly portability if the council was to move to new accommodation. Some technical risks with regard to wireless systems were raised by some suppliers, such as radio interference, though other suppliers recommended wireless and felt that with modern equipment any interference problems could be overcome.

5.2 More pertinent were the cost and accessibility issues. Not only are wireless systems significantly more expensive to buy, upwards of £15K more, but they are also expensive to run in that it is someone's task to charge batteries, put out, and take back in up to 50 wireless mics for every meeting. In terms of portability issues, suppliers advised that the cost of moving a hard-wired system to another council chamber was not a significant cost and therefore should not be a major factor in our decision.

5.3 External groups using the Council chamber could easily be given access to a hard-wired system, whereas access to a wireless system would require significant staff input.

5.4 On this basis it was decided that a wired system for the Council Chamber was appropriate.

5.5 It was agreed that a wireless solution would be more appropriate for the Pittville room so that it could be fully portable to other venues and would give flexibility in the way the room was arranged. Again some savings could be made on the quotes given by having shared microphones.

5.6 ID Registration

The option of ID registration and the cost was discussed with the supplier. The ID facility would enable a name caption feature to be included in the video stream and displayed on the screen and would be essential for digital voting. The ID functionality offered by the supplier would include the provision of 100 ID cards and an ID card reader on each microphone.

This would enable the speaker to be identified during any debate. The alternative would be for Members to sit in fixed positions in the chamber. Either way the additional cost for the ID facility (detailed in exempt appendix) was considered high by the working group, the Cabinet Member and others, so the Cabinet Member decided not to recommend this facility.

It is a facility that could be added retrospectively albeit the cost would be somewhat higher

5.7 Social Media Streaming

With the steer from Cabinet, it was agreed that this first step into web casting would support the council's ambition to engage more people in the democratic process and particularly young people. Indeed it became clear during the investigation process that social media casting/streaming is a more appropriate term than webcasting.

5.8 'Entry level' webcasting versus 'state of the art' webcasting, with audio and video recording.

5.9 Both of these terms, though used in the council's tender documents in order to solicit a wide range of solutions, need some clarification. Apart from the major price difference the contrast is best summarised as follows:

- Both options give live streaming to the web and connect to a recorder, for subsequent posting on social media, YouTube websites etc. Both of these systems include cameras which will pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ), and operate automatically.
- The 'State of the art' option gives a lot more integration to other parts of the AV (audio-visual) system, as in links to modern.gov, digital voting, and more. After the meeting viewers could easily home in on any particular agenda item and any particular speaker as all the relevant links to modern.gov would have been set up. The fully integrated systems require an initial outlay in the order of £15-30K from the figures we were quoted from suppliers and external hosting support which is typically around £10,000 per annum This could also be restricted to a certain usage per annum, typically 60 hours depending on the hosting contract.
- The 'Entry level' option is rather more than simply a camera at a location as with the right technology the camera can be automatically homed in on the speaker and then moves to the next speaker. Additional cameras ensure this changeover appears more smoothly to the viewer. The indexing links to the committee minutes system would not be available and any indexing facilities would be basic. This would include an agenda item caption on the video stream which would enable the viewer to identify the agenda item but would not allow them to automatically jump to that item on the recording i.e. they would have to scroll through. As explained in paragraph 5.6 the speaker name would not be identified on the video stream without the ID card option. The costs for this entry-level option are typically in the order of £7K. However the advantage is that there are no hosting costs which would incur substantial revenue spend, as the output is hosted on social media.
- The Cabinet Member also initiated a study into an in-house supplied stand-alone option, similar to that being operated at Exeter City Council and developed by their Communications team using a single camera which could be purchased for around £500. Whilst this option would be very low cost, it is labour-intensive, hence this solution would generate some extra revenue costs through increased officer time for continuously staffing

it in addition to Democratic Services support at the meeting. It would also be necessary to ensure that the sound quality was of a high enough standard if the recordings were likely to be referred back to.

- The working group had given a very clear 'steer' that it expected a 'no frills' project. In terms of costs the latter two systems would be purchased outright, whereas fully integrated systems require substantial additional revenue cost. In conclusion the deciding factor is revenue cost which rules out the fully hosted system and also makes the single camera option requiring manual operation problematic; **hence the supplier's 'entry level' option is recommended.**

5.10 Replacing audio-visual presentation system in the Council Chamber

A wireless audio-visual presentation system has been recommended by the supplier following their site visit and this would enhance the facilities in the chamber for presentations. Presentations could be made from the operator laptop but could also be presented wirelessly from another device positioned anywhere in the chamber. With added concerns from Property Services about the age and longevity of the current system this seemed a good facility to add to the project for a moderate cost. It would also make the chamber more attractive to external users should the council decided it wanted to hire out its facilities at any point.

5.11 Other facilities

Assistive listening and additional speakers in the public gallery were all deemed to be essential so no other options were considered. A download feature from modern.gov is also included to enable agenda items to be automatically downloaded by the operator and displayed on the screen and video stream.

5.12 Digital voting

It has been suggested by some that this was an essential requirement so that residents could see how their councillor voted on every issue and hence hold their councillor to account. However given the costings the majority of the working group felt this was an unnecessary cost and the current procedures for a recorded vote were perfectly adequate. It should of course be added that anybody watching the proceedings on social media will be able to see how voting, and particularly recorded voting takes place, much as if they were present in the council chamber.

5.13 Maintenance contract

The supplier will offer a discount for a 5 year contract paid up front and a future revenue cost would have to be planned in at the end of the five-year period to cover future maintenance. It is proposed that this maintenance cost could be covered from the capital sum in 2018/19 but the maintenance provision for the municipal building is increased by £1000 per annum to cover future maintenance. It is proposed that this could be found from existing budgets but otherwise a growth bid would be required.

6. Data protection and GDPR implications

6.1 The council is currently working on a project to ensure it is fully compliant with the new GDPR regulations being introduced in May 2018. The implications of web casting and the permanent record on social media will need to be assessed and appropriate privacy statements produced and a retention policy agreed.

7. Performance management –monitoring and review

7.1 The new sound system will continue to be managed as a project and regular meetings will be held with the Cabinet Member and Project Sponsor. In addition to Democratic services and Property services, officers from the web team and ICT Publica have also been allocated to the project.

7.2 The project will aim for an implementation date by September 2018 when meetings restart after the summer recess. The implementation work is expected to be completed within a two-week

timescale.

Report author	Contact officer: Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager, rosalind.reeves@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 77 4937
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Risk Assessment2. Tender evaluation details3. Detailed scores and costings for the successful bidder
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. None

Risk Assessment

Appendix 1

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk					
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register	
	If the current sound system in the Council Chamber is not replaced then there is a risk that it may fail at any time and thereby reduce public and Member accessibility	Head of Property	Sept 2017	3	5	15	Reduce	Replace the system asap	Dec 2018	GD		
	The same risk for the Pittville Room	Head of Property	March 2018	3	4	12	Reduce	Replace the system asap	Dec 2018	GD		
	If the council moves out of the Municipal offices then the equipment may not be able to be easily relocated without significant costs	Head of Property	Sept 2017	3	3	9	Reduce	Ensure this is set out as a requirement in the tender process. Ensure this is taken into account in the Accommodation strategy when planning meeting facilities.	Jan 2018 Ongoing Till 2023	GD MS/GD		
	If the public are not able to hear the proceedings in the gallery then this will reduce their participation in the democratic process	DSM	Sept 2017	3	4	12	Reduce	Replace the sound system and have additional speakers in the gallery and overflow linkage to the Pittville room Organise public speaking training for Councillors	Dec 2018 Dec 2018	GD RR		
	If the council does not make its meetings	Head of Strategy and	March 2018	2	3	6	Reduce	Ensure communications	April 2018	RG		

	available on the web in some form, then public participation in the democratic process will not be facilitated or enhanced	Engagement						resources are committed to the project Include basic web casting in the project The communications team are supporting and fully utilising social media to promote the service during its first year.	Dec 2018 April 2019	RR RG	
	If the council opts for a basic webcasting solution which does not integrate with modern.gov or provide indexing to agenda items then public expectations may not be met or take up will be low if there	DSM	March 2018	2	4	8	Reduce	Explore options within the entry level solution to provide some simple indexing or breaks in recording.	Dec 2018	RG	
	If the council opts not to have Id cards then a speaker cannot be identified on the video stream or on the display in the Council chamber unless a fixed seating plan is adopted	DSM	March 2018	2	5	10	Accept	Ensure the implication of the decision not to have ID cards is spelt out in the report.	April 2018	RG	
	If we do not opt for Id cards for each microphone then this may limit future flexibility for digital voting and webcasting especially if there is no fixed layout	DSM	March 2018	3	3	9	Accept	Ensure the system chosen supports potential future requirements or the implications of not doing this are fully understood.	April 2018	MS	

	in the new accommodation.										
	If the council goes for a phased approach then the individual elements quoted from suppliers may cost more in the future if they are done piecemeal or it may reduce suppliers discount	Head of Property	March 2018	2	4	8	Reduce	Agree with the supplier the level of spend required to achieve discounts and aim to achieve as much as desired within the budget	May 2018	GD	
	If the council does not assess the data privacy requirements of web casting then it may be in breach of the GDPR regulations.	DSM	March 2018	4	3	12	Reduce	Complete an assessment for the function and appropriate privacy statement	April 2018	RR	
	If a 5 year maintenance contract is included in the capital costs then at the end of this period there will be no revenue budget to support future maintenance costs	Head of Property	March 2018	3	2	6	Reduce	If the decision is taken to go ahead with the new sound system consider increasing the maintenance costs of the Municipal building to cover the annual cost of £1000. .	April 2018	GD	

Explanatory notes

Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6

(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close