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**PART A: MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 25 JULY 2019**

**REPORT OF THE: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER  
SIMON COPLEY**

**TITLE OF REPORT: REPLACEMENT OF THE MICROPHONE AND ELECTRONIC  
VOTING SYSTEM AND CONSIDERATION OF LIVE  
STREAMING OF MEETINGS**

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report sets out the requirement to replace the microphone and electronic voting system and also asks Members to consider whether they wish to include live streaming of meetings in the replacement system.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 It is recommended that

- (i) The requirement to replace the microphone and electronic voting system be noted and approved;
- (ii) Members decide whether they wish to include live streaming of meetings in the replacement system, and if so, whether this just applies to Full Council meetings or also committees.

### **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 To keep Members informed and seek their views prior to a procurement process being undertaken.

### **4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

4.1 Failure of the existing microphone / voting units or the existing system as a whole has the potential to disrupt meetings and the business being considered, and also to prevent access to these meetings for people with a hearing impairment.

4.2 The introduction of live streaming would mitigate risks around access to meetings, for

those who are unable to get to Ryedale House and for those who are unable to attend in an evening. It would also allow officers and Members who may wish to hear a debate on a particular item of business to do so from home, rather than having to attend the meeting in person, and therefore it supports flexible ways of working.

- 4.3 There are risks associated with live streaming in so far as the costs are significant and it may be a service which is used by only a very small number of people. An additional local resource in IT would be required to support the management of the streaming process for each meeting.

## **5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 This report relates to the Council priority on customers and communities, as live streaming has the potential to increase access to the Council's meetings, and to the One Ryedale priority, as it relates to the innovative use of IT.

## **REPORT**

### **6.0 REPORT DETAILS**

- 6.1 The current microphone and voting system was procured in 2009 when the Civic Suite was refurbished and implemented in 2010. The normal expectation for an IT system such as this would be a lifespan of 5 years. The system is now nearly 5 years beyond this. Members may be aware that individual units and battery packs have failed and been replaced, and this sometimes causes some disruption at meetings. Spare component parts have not been available for some time, so the current system has been nursed along, partly awaiting a final decision on the future location of the Council offices. However it is now at a point where a replacement needs to be procured.
- 6.2 Interest has been expressed in the live streaming of meetings. There are two ways of doing this, either through leasing or through a mixture of leasing and capital purchase. Owing to the flexible use of the Council Chamber for different meetings and other events, and the various room layouts required, a wide angle camera view would be required on live streaming, rather than cameras zooming in on individual speakers. The benefits of live streaming include access to meetings for those who are unable to get to Ryedale House, for those who are unable to attend in an evening, for those who don't wish to sit through a meeting for a later item of business, and for officers and Members working from home. In addition, when meetings occur which consider items of business in which there is a high level of interest, all interested parties will be able to see and hear the debate in real time, regardless of limitations on space at Ryedale House. The potential risk is that very small numbers of people will use the service and that the costs therefore outweigh the benefits.
- 6.3 Scarborough Borough Council and City of York Council currently live stream their meetings. North Yorkshire County Council and the other District and Borough Councils in the area do not.
- 6.4 City of York Council report that their average per meeting viewing figures are 542 for Full Council, 216 for the Executive, 322 for Planning Committee and 147 for Area Planning Sub-Committee.
- 6.5 Scarborough Borough Council's total viewing figures, measured as total unique IP addresses, with the split between live and archive viewings indicated in brackets, for

January-June 2019 are 611 for Full Council (143 / 534), 211 for the Cabinet (28 / 195) and 146 for Planning & Development Committee (17 / 137). Scarborough are however reviewing their use of live streaming because of the high costs and significant amount of staff time required to support the process.

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

a) Financial

The cost of replacing the current system will be over £50k. This assumes that the current infrastructure, which is housed in and around the cabinet on the stage in the Council Chamber, does not need replacement.

For the leasing option for live streaming, costs would be over £20k per year, although this could be reduced through multiple year contracts.

For the leasing and capital purchase option, the annual costs could be halved but there would still be an initial spend of over £20k.

Prices usually cover a set number of hours of live streaming per year. Further costs may apply to any additional hours. If Members decided to support live streaming, then a decision would be needed as to whether this applied only to Full Council meetings or also to all committees.

Costs will be covered through existing capital and revenue budgets.

There may also be a cost for the additional staffing resource detailed below.

b) Legal

There are no legal implications. The required impact assessments have been or will be undertaken (see below) and the appropriate procurement process will be followed.

c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental and Climate Change, Crime & Disorder)

In terms of staffing, an additional local resource in IT may be required to support the management of the streaming process for each meeting. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and this shows that the use of live streaming has a positive impact. If Members wish to go ahead with live streaming, a data privacy impact assessment would have to be undertaken and this would then feed into the procurement process. Climate change implications will be assessed through the procurement process, in particular equipment energy use and also any information available relating to production. Live streaming of meetings may reduce the need for people to travel to meetings, having a small climate change benefit.

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**Background Papers:**

None

**Background Papers are available for inspection at:**

N/a