


Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Council	
Date:	November 2018	
Report Title:	Options for Audio Visual Equipment for the Council Chamber	

1 Purpose / Summary

The audio visual equipment purchased for use in public meetings by elected members and members of the public have come to the end of their useful life. This report is to outline the options for a replacement system.

2 Key issues

- The existing microphone system is in excess of ten years old and over the last two years increasing difficulties have been experienced with the microphones and system set-up at Council and Committee meetings;
- Due to the age of the system, the repair of faults had become increasingly difficult with a number of the replacement parts required now obsolete; this has meant an increasing number of microphones are currently unusable;
- To ensure the smooth running of Committee meetings, a review of our current equipment is required to assess our current needs and available technology to deliver those needs.
- Research has been undertaken and a number of options identified in relation to the procurement of microphones with their associated indicative costs. Desktop research has also been conducted to assess options associated with webcasting meetings and voting systems. Due to the significant additional costs associated with this functionality a procurement process would need to be undertaken to understand exact costs, however indicative costs are provided within the report.

3 Recommendations

At the Member briefing on 1st November audio visual equipment was demonstrated to Councillors present and a preference was expressed for option 1 (replacing 39 microphones) and option 3 (integrated voting system).

These options represent a solution that could be utilised for a further 10 years therefore providing value for money over the medium term whilst also enabling accessibility to Council meetings and decision making.

Members are asked to;

- Recommend the replacement of 39 microphones with integrated voting system and associated infrastructure upgrade costs (£80k).
- Recommend the replacement of the projector within the Council Chamber (£10k).
- Consider the addition of an audio/ visual webcasting service with links to social media (£17k per annum).
- Or consider the addition of an audio only streaming service (£4k per annum).

- Delegate to the Corporate Director (Finance) and Portfolio Holder for Finance to appoint the most economically advantageous contractor based on the preferred option stated by Members.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Anne Hay – Portfolio Holder for Finance
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Background Paper(s)	Council Minutes July 2018

4 Background

- 4.1 The District Council is committed to maximising transparency and public participation in the democratic decision making process. A fundamental requirement to achieve that aim is that elected members and local residents can hear discussions at public meetings and participate in accordance with the rules outlined in the constitution.
- 4.2 There is an urgent need to replace the existing system, the option to do nothing is not one for consideration as the existing system is currently inoperable. Meetings of Full Council are currently supported by a hired system as the legacy system is not sufficiently reliable to be used.
- 4.3 The legacy system whilst recognised as being one of the industry leaders when originally procured has been superseded with the emergence and rollout of new more reliable technology.
- 4.4 As such the Council has a requirement for a replacement committee microphone system that is capable of supporting the Council in providing open access to debates and decisions at committee meetings and is robust enough to meet the ongoing needs of the Council. This requirement includes;
- A robust and flexible microphone system that is easy to use and can support multiple meeting structures and layouts
 - The option to add in additional future proof functionality as required i.e. recorded vote casting, web casting etc.

5 Future considerations

- 5.1 The Council Chamber is the main venue used to support Committee meetings. The room is flexible in its use and can be configured in a number of ways to ensure the best layout is achieved to facilitate maximum engagement with all meetings regardless of their structure.

- 5.2 Any future microphone system will therefore have to be wireless to accommodate the flexible use of the venue as hard wired microphones would not support this. Wireless microphones will require a charging facility.
- 5.3 We have sought indicative quotes from suppliers and utilised market research from other local Councils in order that we have an understanding of the associated replacement costs.

A number of options are below:

Option 1

5.4 **Procure a wireless conferencing system with 39 microphones**

This option would comprise of procuring 39 single delegate microphones with each unit being capable of being configured as a single delegate unit and Chairman unit or a dual delegate unit. The 'Chairman' configuration enables an all mute function or an off switch that turns off any active microphones. The Microphones will detect a speaker who is seated or standing. This option includes the provision of a new charging case / trolley when fully charged batteries can last approximately 20 hours. This option enables other future proof functionality to be added to it such as a voting system and / or web casting either audio and visual images or purely audio web casting. Option 1 represents the building blocks for additional functionality which are outlined in option 3 and 4

The costs for the procurement and installation of this option are approximately **£40-45,000**.

Option 2

5.5 **Procure a wireless conferencing system with 20 microphones**

This option would involve the procurement of the same microphones and charging case/ trolley as outlined in option 1 however rather than purchasing a unit for each individual delegate we opt to utilise all units as dual units, therefore we would only need to procure 20 microphones which can be used by 2 delegates at any one time. The microphones can be configured so that each individual delegate can activate the unit.

The main consideration of this option is whilst it is more cost effective than option 1 it offers the Council less resilience in the event of any unit having a fault.

The costs associated with this option are approximately **£24-£27,000**.

Option 3

5.6 **Procure an integrated voting system which is add on functionality to option 1**

Other local Councils have been researching the replacement of their own AV equipment therefore we have been able to utilise their market testing information.

This option is the inclusion of additional functionality associated with option 1 outlined above (namely the procurement of 39 wireless microphones) and therefore the costs associated with the integrated voting functionality must be considered in conjunction with the costs outlined in option1. Option 3 would include the procurement of a voting system and identification at seat as well an upgrade to the AV cabling which would be required to accommodate the new system.

The indicative cost which would need to be tested through a procurement process based on our specific requirements would be approximately **£27,000 plus the costs associated with option 1**

Option 4

5.7 Procure webcasting which is add on functionality to Option 1

There are options in relation to leasing or purchasing equipment to facilitate webcasting. This option is the inclusion of additional functionality associated with option 1 outlined above (namely the procurement of 39 wireless microphones) and therefore the costs associated with the web casting functionality must be considered in conjunction with the costs outlined in option1.

Regardless of whether a decision is taken to lease or purchase the web casting functionality this would include cameras, decoder plus associated installation and equipment with a pay as you go buying of blocks of time to web cast on an ad hoc basis = approximately **£40,000 over a three year period plus the costs associated with option 1**

Option 5

5.7 Retain existing system and replace all the batteries in the current microphones

A local company has assessed our current microphone system which was industry leading at the time of purchase and believes if we replaced all of the batteries in the microphones and invested in an annual maintenance plan (purely in relation to the batteries as the microphones can no longer be the subject of a maintenance plan due to the age of the hardware) then our current system could potentially last a further 3-5 years.

There is no opportunity for adding functionality such as voting system with our current system if Members wished to add this in future.

The cost of replacement batteries is approximately **£3,000 plus £1000-£1500** annual maintenance.

Option 6

5.8 Procure a like for like replacement system

A local company has provided a quote to replace our current microphone system with a like for like system. For 20-30 microphones, we have been quoted approximately **£30,000**.

A system of this nature is unable to have functionality added to it to accommodate future needs.

Other considerations

5.8 Members may also wish to consider procuring an annual maintenance contract associated with the microphones to ensure they are regularly serviced and can be fixed in the event of any issues. Indicative maintenance costs per annum are **£3000** however this could be considerably higher depending on the package purchased.

5.9 In addition to the microphones it is also worthy of note that the screen and projector in the Council Chamber whilst they have served us well they too are already 14 years old and therefore members may wish to take this opportunity to consider their replacement. The equipment is no longer supportable and any failure will necessitate replacement. Costs for a new projector and screen are in the region of **£10-£15,000**.

- 5.10 Web casting can be added to any system however the more integrated the system the better sound quality that can be achieved through live streaming.
- 5.11 Officers have researched many options some of which we have had to discard. One option considered was the provision of microphones suspended from the ceiling of the Council Chamber. Contractors have undertaken an assessment of the Council Chamber in order to provide us with indicative costs of the various options outlined in the report. As a result we have advised that due to the flexible use of the room, suspended microphones would not be suitable and therefore this option has not been included for consideration.

6 Procurement

- 6.1 Dependent on the option chosen by Members, a procurement process will need to be conducted to ensure best value and comply with procurement rules. The indicative costs within the paper have been sourced from comparison with the cost of other like installations in other Council Chambers and also from visits from potential suppliers therefore costs associated with each option may go up or down depending on our exact specification, the procurement route used or the range of suppliers which bid.