

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

URGENT REPORT TO CABINET ON 9 DECEMBER 2019

SUBJECT:	Update on Webcasting of Meetings
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REPORT AUTHOR:	Liz Fatcher – Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer
DATE:	July 2019
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This urgent report is presented at the request of the Chairman, Councillor Dr Walsh so the Cabinet can be updated on the actions being taken to respond to serious concerns raised with the recent webcasting of Council meetings.

In accordance with Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) section 2.0, paragraph 2.3 of the Council's Constitution, the Cabinet may consider items of an urgent nature where special circumstances apply. The circumstances for presenting this report as a matter of urgency are to ensure that Members are aware of the steps being taken with the Council's supplier ahead of the next round of meetings due to be webcast in January 2020 and can raise any further actions they wish officers to take.

This is not a key decision and therefore the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview Select Committee is not required. However, Councillor Coster has been informed of the report being presented.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) note the update given; and
- (2) agree any further actions that they wish officers to take.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The webcasting service is provided by Auditel UK Limited. This company also provide and service the sound system in the Council Chamber.
- 1.2 Cabinet are reminded of the decision that they took on 8 July 2019 for officers to procure an agreement with Auditel to webcast Full Council and Development Control Committee meetings for the next year at a one off total cost which was to be contained within the existing budget. The total cost was £10,750.
- 1.3 Cabinet was also informed at this meeting of the officer group that had already been set up to examine future webcasting needs and associated costs; and report back once this work was concluded.

2.0 CURRENT POSITION

2.1 Prior to November 2018 when the decision was taken by the then Cabinet Member for Planning to webcast meetings of the Development Control Committee, the Council had rarely used its webcasting facilities and, therefore, testing had been minimal. However, as Members are aware, the more frequent use of the system has demonstrated that the webcasting service is not performing well. Issues faced have included a loss of sound; the live webcast stopping and not restarting; and camera alignments changing mid meeting. This is despite significant effort and resource from the officer team to work with Auditel to properly prepare for meetings; manage the risks of failure; and follow up performance issues. The system has now failed at four meetings in the last six months, namely:

- Annual Council on 22 May 2019
- Development Control Committee on 9 October 2019
- Full Council on 18 September 2019
- Full Council on 13 November 2019

There have been further issues with the supplier/customer relationship plus a breakdown of the sound and presentational equipment in early November that affected a number of meetings.

2.2 The issues have been escalated with Auditel's senior management team and they have been made fully aware of our dissatisfaction with their service to date. An action plan has been developed, but its anticipated success is unknown.

2.3 The difficulty that the Council faces is that this is currently the only system available for webcasting until the procurement exercise is concluded. This exercise will not be concluded until Spring 2020 at the earliest. Furthermore, it is likely that any new system will require a considerable budget. The view of the officer team is that if Members wish to limit the risk of future embarrassment from the webcasting failing that the live webcast should be ceased with immediate effect. The system would still allow the meetings to be recorded and published the following day. This element of the system is currently proving reliable. The Cabinet are asked to consider whether they wish to action this view.

2.4 In terms of the procurement exercise, the officer team are working with suppliers in a pre-tender stage and once all the implications and likely costs are identified, a report will be brought back to the Cabinet for consideration. This will involve growth that is currently not budgeted for.

2.5 For Members information, the webcasting 'hits' since May 2019 are set out below. 'Live' hits are those watched at the time of the meeting. 'On Demand' are those watched once the recording has been uploaded to the Council's website after the meeting.

Meeting	Date	Number of Hits
Annual Council	22 May 2019	Total Views – 670 Live – 509 On Demand – 161
Development Control Committee	5 June 2019	Total Views – 458 Live – 213 On Demand – 245
Development Control Committee	27 June 2019	Total Views – 238 Live – 120

			On Demand – 118
	Development Control Committee	10 July 2019	Total Views – 123 Live – 38 On Demand – 85
	Council	17 July 2019	Total Views – 165 Live – 59 On Demand – 106
	Development Control Committee	7 August 2019	Total Views – 291 Live – 217 On Demand – 74
	Development Control Committee	4 September 2019	Total Views – 360 Live – 193 On Demand – 167
	Council	18 September 2019	Total Views – 689 Live – 331 On Demand – 358
	Development Control Committee	9 October 2019	Total Views – 307 Live – 153 On Demand – 154
	Special Council	10 October 2019	Total Views – 256 Live – 78 On Demand – 178
	Development Control Committee	6 November 2019	Total Views – 113 Live – 62 On Demand – 51
	Special Council	13 November 2019	Total Views – 27 Live – 10 On Demand - 17
	Council	13 November 2019	Total Views – 262 Live – 123 On Demand – 139

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to note the update given; seek any other information needed from officers; and agree any further actions that it wishes officers to take.

4.0 OPTIONS:

1. To accept the officer recommendations; or
2. To propose an alternative way forward.

5.0 CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman of the Overview Select Committee 	✓	

6.0 ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail below)	YES	NO
Financial		✓
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓

7.0 IMPLICATIONS:

None at this stage

8.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To respond to the Chairman's request for an update to be given ahead of the next round of meetings due to be webcast.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Cabinet report and decision from 8 July 2019

<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=649&Ver=4>