

**To the Chair and Members of  
The COUNCIL**

## **AUDIO AND VISUAL RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report seeks Members approval for the future audio and visual recording of Full Council meetings and the Annual Council Meeting and the creation of a record of the proceedings to be retained as a source of reference.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. That Council support the audio and visual recording of Council meetings with effect from September 2015.
3. That audio and visual recordings of Council meetings be made accessible and available on the Council's web site following the meeting.
4. That any editing of recordings, to ensure they are suitable and appropriate for viewing via the Council's website, be agreed by the Monitoring Officer.
5. That subject to approval a further report be submitted to Council within the current municipal year reporting back on the implementation of these arrangements together with any associated protocols and to consider whether Members would wish to implement arrangements for webcasting.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

6. Recording the proceedings of Council meetings will offer the citizens of Doncaster an accessible resource and allow them to listen and view a true record of Council meetings. It allows the Council an opportunity to demonstrate openness, transparency and accountability to the residents of Doncaster.

### **BACKGROUND**

7. A number of requests have recently been made to investigate the possibilities of audio visual recording of council meetings. At present there is no legal requirement for the council to record the proceedings of council meetings. Currently the chair of council leads the meetings and offers delegates the opportunity to speak individually via their own allocated microphone, using a stand-alone pa and conference system within the council chamber and this is projected on to plasma screens. Unless there is consideration of exempt information The Openness of Public Bodies Regulations 2014 allows members of the public and others the freedom to record Council meetings using whatever means they choose.

8. In keeping with the Government's openness agenda and to ensure there is an accurate record of decisions and debate, investigations have been made into the possibility of recording Council meetings. It is recommended that the initial consideration should be given to retaining and providing an audio visual recording of the meeting accessible through the Council website. This is the most cost effective option and allows Council to consider at a later date if it would wish to consider live webcasting.
9. The current Chamber management system can be upgraded and modified to allow for both webcasting and audio visual recording. Initially it is expected that an additional microphone will need to be installed in the Chamber to pick up any ambient sound. This will ensure that there is continuity during the recording. If a microphone is not present to record this ambient sound, the recording will be silent between speakers and any comments from the public gallery and contributors without microphones will not be recorded.
10. Initial investigations suggest the calibrating and installation of the equipment to enable audio visual recording would require one day on site by the appointed installer. It is expected there would be on site training provided by the appointed installer comprising one half day of training for officers and Members. Additional training sessions could be provided if required, for example, as part of the induction for new Members at the beginning of the new municipal year.
11. The recordings are intended to be made accessible to the public as a true record of proceedings. However, there may be occasions where exempt items are discussed or sensitive dialogue or comments are made which would be omitted from the version uploaded to the Council's website. The Council would retain the unedited version. A decision with regard to the editing of recordings would need to be agreed by Council during the proceedings of the meeting or any subsequent edits would be made subject to agreement by the Monitoring Officer if this were deemed necessary.
12. Any links to audio visual recordings would remain accessible on the website for a period of 12 months. The minutes from these meetings which form a true and official record of proceedings and decisions will continue to be retained on the Council's website and intranet on the new Committee Management system.
13. Although it is recommended that recordings of Council meetings are initially undertaken once installed the facility may be used to record other meetings and training sessions in the Council Chamber as required. Live broadcasts of Council meetings may be made available in the future subject to Council consideration and approval at a later date.
14. If agreed it is expected that the arrangements would be implemented from September 2015. This would provide an opportunity for installation, testing, training and trialling.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASON FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

15. Option one is that Council agrees the recommendation to create an audio visual record of Council meetings. This supports the Governments openness agenda and good governance by demonstrating transparency and accountability in decision making.
16. Option two is to decline the recommendation that the Council creates an audio visual recording of Council meetings.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.	Providing audio visual recordings of Council meetings will improve openness and transparency and contribute to improved governance arrangements.

## RISKS & ASSUMPTIONS

17. In response to the introduction of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations of 2014, the Council allows attendees of Council meetings including members of the public and the Press to make their own recordings of public meetings, providing they focus on the speaker and only film the delegates who are speaking about a specific issue. The Council cannot govern these recordings and has no control on any individual manipulating and editing their recordings to give an inaccurate record of the content of the meeting. The Council cannot prevent the publishing of these recordings. By creating a true and transparent audio recording of the proceedings of Council meetings, the Authority has a tool with which to counteract any issue related to possible manipulated audio recordings.
18. Subject to Council agreeing to progress with the audio visual recording of Council meetings arrangements will be put in place to ensure this is detailed on the front of the agenda. The Chair will also make clear at the start of the meeting that all or part of the meeting will be recorded. Elected Members and the public will be advised that by entering the Chamber they are consenting to being filmed and that those images and sound recordings may be made available on the Council's web site and /or training purposes.
19. If the recording of Council meetings is agreed, the Monitoring Officer would be asked to reflect this change of practice in the Council's Constitution.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The Council has the legal power to record meetings by virtue of both S111 Local Government Act 1972 and S1 Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence).

21. The Openness of Public Bodies Regulations 2014 allows members of the public and others the freedom to record Council meetings using whatever means they choose.
22. It is not proposed at this time to broadcast a live transmission of meetings, however, later publication is planned. A party who believes that they have been libelled would have an action against both the person making the statement and the Council as “broadcaster”. The Council will need to be wary of this going forward and will need to consider editing such content “out” of any published recordings.
23. It will be necessary to make attendees at meetings aware of the recording and potential broadcast of the meeting. As highlighted within the body of the report the Council’s constitution will need to be amended to take account of this development.
24. The Council’s contract with Nuway will require amending and any changes must be carried out in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

25. The supplier of the PA and Conference system installed within the Chamber has quoted £3650 plus VAT to enable the facility to record meetings and the provision of training (source Nuway Audio Visual 28.11.2014).
26. Due regard must be given to the council’s Contract Procedure Rules before this procurement commences (Intranet link: [Contract Procedure Rules](#)).
27. Subject to a successful quote being the selected procurement route, the cost of the system work required to enable recording and the training of Councillors/Officers, will be met from existing equipment and training budgets within Democratic Services.
28. For information, initial enquiries in 2013 suggested that the cost of web casting could be in the region of £20k to £37k for a three year period depending on specification and the type of equipment or system.

## **PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS**

29. The original contract was tender in accordance with Council Contract Procedure Rules. The original tender specification require that public address and electronic voting system was both capable of broadcasting and recording council meetings, with current supplier submitting both pricing and suggested suitable solutions within their original tender submission.
30. Legal services will need to be involved to ensure that in exercising its rights the contract is varied to reflect the options taken up.

31. Any additional equipment or software required outside the contract for the public address and electronic voting system will need to be procured in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

32. Video and audio files are typically very large data files and the ICT team will need to evaluate any impact on data storage for the solution implemented with files needing to be retained for 12 months. Advice will be sought from the appointed supplier but it may be that the use of video compression techniques will enable the size of these files to be reduced to help with storage. Smaller video and audio files will improve citizen's time required to download or start viewing the video content.
33. Additional software will be required to edit the video/audio files and any software procured should support the flexible working principles of the Councils Worksmart programme to provide access in a "hot desking" environment.
34. Publishing the video/audio content to the internet, for example via the Council's YouTube channel, may reduce the dependency on Council systems for accessing video and audio files of meetings and should ensure accessibility for citizens from multiple devices.
35. In accordance with the Councils ICT Governance process this report, if approved will be referred to the Councils Information Governance Board for prioritisation and then implementation by ICT.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

36. The proposal to provide an audio recording of Council meetings enable's greater access to local decision making to those who may not otherwise be able to attend Council meeting e.g. due to disability.

## **CONSULTATION**

37. Consultation has taken place with the relevant departments of the Council in producing this report.

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