

Policy & Resources Committee

Report Title:	Livestreaming Meetings
Meeting Date:	7 November 2023
Contact Officer:	Lizzie Fuller, Committee Services & Processes Officer

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Councillors with background information to enable them to make a decision on whether to support *in principle* that improvements to the audio / visual system in the Upper Chamber be explored to enable the provision of livestreaming meetings.

Action Required

2. To consider supporting, in principle, the provision of livestreaming meetings and associated replacement audio / visual equipment in the Town Hall Upper Chamber, subject to a full specification and tender exercise in line with Financial Regulations.

Upper Chamber Acoustics Background

3. The poor acoustics in the Town Hall's Upper Chamber have long been recognised as an issue. Complaints have been received from the public, as well as TTC Councillors / Officers, that audio is poor during council meetings.
4. An Acoustics Survey was conducted in 2017 and presented to the Council with options of panels, baize table covers, and curtains to address the reverberation problems. No action was taken however the findings remain relevant as the room has not been otherwise altered.
5. The Upper Chamber acoustics are not the focus of this report, although clearly relevant.

Livestreaming Meetings

6. It has become more standardised and expected across the council sector, particularly since Covid-19, for council meetings to be livestreamed (note that legislation requires Councillors to be physically present at meetings). The Town Council has received requests to livestream its meetings.
7. Enhanced audio/visual equipment in the Upper Chamber would:
 - a. increase transparency by enabling more people to observe the meetings.
 - b. enable speakers to attend remotely which may encourage greater public participation at meetings.
 - c. Enhance the hall hire offering.

Update on Livestreaming Meetings

8. A site visit and quote have been provided by one company, who TTC was referred to after an initial enquiry for Logitech's RallyBar. This was done to establish what might be feasible and establish an approximate cost to take to 2024/25 budget setting.

The quote includes:

- A new display monitor and mount (to replace existing pull-down screen and outdated / not-fit-for-purpose projector)
 - Digital audio server
 - Microphone system – wireless & directional microphones
 - Microsoft Teams Camera System (to enable livestreaming)
 - Cables / accessories
 - Installation engineers, delivery and travel
9. There are challenges in the Upper Chamber which mean a more specialist approach is required. The building being listed prevents any major works being undertaken / added. The high ceilings also significantly restrict the number of options available as most modern products (Owl, Logitech Rally Bar etc.) have a maximum room size which the Upper Chamber exceeds.
10. The Budget Working Group (24 October 2023) expressed that they would support improvements to the audio / visuals in the Upper Chamber but felt that the acoustics needed to be addressed first.
11. An independent local audio/visual specialist will be asked to review the quote to ensure value for money and offer technical advice.
12. A further two quotes will be obtained given the value of the works. All companies who quote will be made aware of the current audio challenges and that the new system must be an improvement. Although clearly the acoustics also need to be addressed, but this may be a parallel project.

Resource Appraisal

13. At this stage, no expenditure is being requested.
14. Subject to a resolution supporting the proposal in principle, and obtaining 3 quotes in line with the Town Council's Procurement Policy / Financial Regulations, this will be brought back to the committee for consideration and to make a recommendation to Full Council as the works will exceed the delegated expenditure of this committee (£10,000).
15. The initial quote is below £30,000 and therefore it is not expected that it will need to use the Government's tender process.
16. There is currently circa £25,000 earmarked for Upper Chamber acoustics.

Risk Assessment

17. There are no risks at this stage.

Legal Powers:

- Local Government Act 1972, Section 145
- Localism Act 2011, Section 28(1)
- Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

Recommendation:

It is recommended...

- i) **To support, in principle, the provision of livestreaming meetings and associated replacement audio / visual equipment in the Town Hall Upper Chamber, subject to a full specification and tender exercise in line with Financial Regulations.**