

REPORT TO Corporate Services 27th September 2018
Executive 9th October 2018
Report of: Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support
Title: REPLACEMENT OF AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1.1 What is the report about?

1.1 This report seeks approval to replace all or some of the Audio Visual equipment at both the Civic Centre and the Guildhall so as to improve the meeting experience for those attending the meeting and also for those watching meeting broadcasts via social media.

1.2 The report gives various options as to how this can be achieved.

2. Recommendation:

2.1 That the Executive consider this matter and make an appropriate recommendation to the Council, as there is no budgetary provision for this in the current budget.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 There are various options available which range in financial terms from £30,000 to £104,923 in costs.

3.2 There is no financial provision for this equipment to be purchased so the Executive will need to consider this proposal against other competing demands.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

4.1 None.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

5.1 If approved, funding will need to be identified for this project. It is not appropriate to borrow for a relatively short dated asset and therefore funding will have to be identified, either from capital receipts or revenue. Council does not have sufficient reserves to set aside revenue for this purpose and therefore it is likely capital receipts will be used to fund the project. This of course means that they are unavailable for any other purpose.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 There are no legal aspects to this report.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

- 8.1 The current Audio Visual (AV) equipment (including microphones) in the Civic Centre's meeting rooms, was installed when the rooms were moved to their current location as part of the Customer First project in 2005. At that time they were on the cutting edge of wireless technology.
- 8.2 The microphones currently used at the Guildhall were those which were replaced as per paragraph 8.1 above, and as such are at least 20 years old. They are all linked by a cable and it has been found on occasion, that once a connection has been lost, the whole system fails.
- 8.3 Technology has moved on significantly since 2005.
- 8.4 Members will be aware that there have been numerous occasions where the technology used in the civic centre meeting rooms and/or Guildhall has failed meaning that the experience for those not only participating in the meetings, but also those attending the meetings, most particularly the public, has been less than satisfactory. This situation has been heightened following the Council's decision to broadcast some of its public meetings via Facebook live.
- 8.5 Officers have received numerous complaints about this unsatisfactory situation, but despite the best efforts of the Council's IT company, as well as leading suppliers of such equipment to solve the issues experienced, no permanent and suitable fix has been found.
- 8.6 Many of those consulted stated that the age of the microphones, and the technology supporting them, is most likely to be the cause of the failures, together with a poor sound amplification system within the Guildhall.
- 8.7 To this end, various options have been sought, so that Members can consider which may be most suitable.
- 8.8 The first option relates to simply replacing the microphones at both the Civic Centre and Guildhall. This would cost approximately £40,000
- 8.9 The second option provides for a replacement of the microphone systems as per paragraph 8.8 above, together with an upgrade of visual equipment in the main civic centre meeting rooms. This would include replacing the screens and projectors in these meeting rooms, with up to date LED screens and all the necessary other equipment, which would, amongst other things, allow for easier presentations to be given. This will cost approximately £55,000
- 8.10 The final provides for all that included in paragraphs 8.8 and 8.9 above, together with:-
 - The replacement of the speakers in the Rennes and Bad Homburg rooms;
 - The replacement of the repeater screens (used in the Bad Homburg room to replicate the image shown at Committees on the main screen in Rennes) with LED screens;
 - The replacement of the radio microphones used at some committee meetings;
 - The installation of permanent webcasting cameras in both the Civic Centre and Guildhall, to enable better screening of committee meetings.

This will “future proof” the facilities within the Civic Centre for a number of years, but will be the most costly at approximately £100,000.

8.11 It is recognised that this is a considerable amount which has not been budgeted for, so members are asked to consider:-

- Whether this is considered a corporate priority when taking into account the many other competing demands the Council has on its financial resources;
- If so, which of the options should be progressed

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan?

9.1 This decision will help promote the City as one which promotes transparency in its decision making process, and encourages members of the public to engage with the council’s meetings and democratic process.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 There are no risks associated with the proposals

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

11.1 None applicable with this decision

12. Are there any other options?

12.1 The Council could decide not to invest in improved equipment which would mean that there would continue to be intermittent issues with its broadcasting ability, leading to customer dissatisfaction.

12.2 The Council would also not promote itself well as one which wants to promote transparency in its decision making process.

**John Street
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**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

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