
Subject:	COUNCIL CHAMBER TECHNOLOGY
Date:	16 April 2021
Decision to be taken by:	Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Leader of the Council
Report of:	Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Chris Vinson, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Digital
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To upgrade Council Chamber technology.

Recommendation:

1. To approve a project for the upgrade of the Council Chamber technology.
2. To request that the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Digital, undertakes a Data Protection Impact Assessment of the project.
3. To delegate authority to the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Digital, to:
 - (i) consider the Data Protection Impact Assessment and, subject thereto,
 - (ii) procure the provider and authorise any contracts to deliver the project.
4. That the Monitoring Officer be requested to report to the Governance Committee and the Council on the changes necessary to the Constitution in order to provide for the live streaming of formal meetings of the Council and its committees and of the executive.

1. Summary

1.1 The current technology in the Council Chamber is outdated and unreliable. This report outlines a proposal to upgrade the Council Chamber technology.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Council Chamber is used for Council meetings and any other meetings or presentations that are too large for the meeting rooms within the Council offices.

2.2 The audio/video systems in the Council Chamber are now at the point where there have been regular issues, including starting up or connecting to the projector. The current set-up does not allow any connectivity to online meeting systems such as Microsoft Teams.

2.3 As the legislation allowing remote Council meetings may not be renewed and Members will have to attend the meetings in person, having the ability to continue allowing Dover

District residents to view the meetings via Microsoft Teams Live Events will make the Council more accessible and transparent. Giving residents more access to keep up to date with decisions being made in the district and hearing the context of the reasons behind them.

- 2.4 The current setup does not work well with flexible working which the Council is adopting more due to the pandemic.

3. **Identification of Options**

- 3.1 Option 1 - Continue with current set-up.
- 3.2 Option 2 - Upgrade the Council Chamber technology using Auditel proposal.

4. **Evaluation of Options**

Option 1 - Continue with current set-up

- 4.1 The Council Chamber technology has not had any investment in a number of years. This has resulted in an unreliable and outdated setup for meetings. The projector does not support modern connections which the new laptops use. As a workaround a converter has been used but this has also proven unreliable. The microphone system is over 30 years old and requires regular patch fixes to keep it running. Keeping the current setup presents a high risk of failure of any part of the setup.

Option 2 - Upgrade the set-up

- 4.2 Upgrading the current technology in the Council Chamber will allow modern style 'hybrid' meetings to take place. In the case of formal meetings of the Council, its Committees and Executive the legal ability of councillors to continue to attend meetings remotely beyond 7 May 2021 is currently in doubt pending either rulings of the court or legislative changes. This does not however preclude the ability of officers and third parties to attend meetings remotely. The project will also provide the technological platform to enable hybrid meetings for other purposes of the Council.
- 4.3 The Auditel proposal replaces the projector with a brighter, widescreen version, making images shown on the laptop screen appear the same way on the projector screen. Mobile devices will be able to wirelessly connect to the projector, streaming audio and video without having to connect cables. The proposal upgrades the microphone system, making it compatible with new technology and the Microsoft Teams room solution will allow the Council Chamber to be the participant in the meetings rather than everyone having to use a laptop. An automated camera tracking system will show who is speaking, by which microphone is active at that time. All new hardware will be covered by a 3-year warranty.
- 4.4 As the project will involve the use of technology in a way that is new to the Council and which will involve the streaming and recording of the voices and images of individuals a Data Protection Impact Assessment will be undertaken prior to the procurement of the project.
- 4.5 The project would, if approved by the Leader, provide the Council with the technical infrastructure to stream meetings, to record them and run hybrid meetings. Approval would not however commit the Council to doing so. In order for this to happen the Council would need to make changes to the Constitution to allow for these things to take place. It is recommended that the Monitoring Officer be requested to bring forward the necessary amendments to the Constitution to the Governance Committee and the Council.

Resource Implications

- 4.6 The overall estimated costs of the project (excluding officer time) is £64k, this has not been included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. However, the budget will come

from the ICT reserve (subject to the approval of the Section 151 Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Digital)

Proposal Section	Cost
Microphone system upgrade	£12,750
Camera tracking system	£9,375
Hybrid Linking – Teams	£7,761
Audio Visuals	£9,715
Audio Visual Control System	£13,500
Widescreen Projector Screen	£630
Installation, Racking, Cabling	£10,275
TOTAL	£64,006

- 4.7 Auditel installed the original equipment and they are the only company that can upgrade it rather than replace it.
- 4.8 The installation will be completed by Auditel, but staff time and resources from Digital Services will be required during implementation, training (change management) and ongoing support.
- 4.9 Digital Services will be supporting the Council Chamber technology. There are also options for a support contract from Auditel. The recommendation is to have a Bronze support contract costing £3,250 per annum. This includes 72hr response, includes 2 full health checks per year on the equipment and will upgrade the 3-year warranty to 5 years on the hardware.

5. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 This is a first step to update the meeting rooms in DDC to allow hybrid meetings. Giving external participants the ability to join meetings without having to travel long distance for a meeting that may last an hour. By encouraging use of the technology, this will help in the reduction of DDC's carbon footprint.

6. **Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): The Accountant has reviewed the report and the financial implications put forward and has no further comment to add
- 6.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
- 6.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

Contact Officer: Abi Robinson, Digital Services Manager