
MEDIA PLATFORMS – WEBCASTING, LOOKING LOCAL AND URTV

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the decision of the Council on 18 August 2011 that the Chief Executive investigate the provision of webcasting equipment to provide a fixed solution for the Council Chamber, an exercise was undertaken to ascertain the options which could be available. An update was submitted to the Council on 19 January 2012, which advised that this exercise had established that there were a number of digital communications possibilities that required further investigation.
- 1.2 A paper setting out these options and seeking views on how they should be progressed was tabled at the SMT on 5 March 2012, and the Chief Officers Group (COG) on 19 March 2012. The report was also on the agenda for the Budget Working Group scheduled for 27 March 2012 but no decision was taken on the paper.
- 1.3 This further report has been updated to reflect the discussions at SMT and COG, and also incorporates new, revised proposals from Brian Keating of URTV, following a meeting the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Customer Services held with him on 31 July 2012.
- 1.4 This report also incorporates feedback from the Lead Councillor, Louise Glen-Lee following a meeting with Executive Director of Customer Services on 5 September 2012.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to;

- 2.1 Agree that the Looking Local service is procured within the 2012/13 financial year, on the basis that the resources are available to do this
- 2.2 Agree that a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) is convened to consider the variety of proposals from URTV, webcasting proposals from Public-I, and video conferencing
- 2.3 Agree that the SLWG is made up of 4 representatives from the Administration (proposed - Councillors Louise Glen-Lee (Chair), John Semple, Michael Breslin, and Gordon Blair) and 2 from the Opposition (to be determined)

3.0 DETAIL

3.1 Following the decision by the full Council on 18 August 2011, which requested that the Chief Executive investigates the provision of webcasting equipment to provide a fixed solution for the Council Chamber, and presentations from Looking Local (at the Joint Process for Change/HR Board on 18 November 2011) and URTV (at the Transformation Board and SMOG on 21 November 2011 and 13 December 2011 respectively), Officers have undertaken research into each of these areas and a summary of each facility, including indicative costs is provided below.

3.2 Looking Local

3.2.1 On 18 November 2011, Shirley Cairns from Kirklees Council attended the Joint Process for Change/HR Board to deliver a presentation on *Looking Local* (formerly DigiTV) digital media services. As part of the Customer Management Project Detailed Design, approved by full Council in 2009, it was stated that “over time, we will need to extend website access to digital television to extend self service access to more of the population”, particularly for those who do not have or use the internet. *Looking Local* is considered a market leader in this field, and was set up by Kirklees Council 7 years ago to meet the needs of local authorities and public sector organisations.

3.2.2 *Looking Local* is focused on the both ends of the technical capability spectrum; the high end mobile device and internet users and delivering transactional Digital Television services to people who have access to broadband but who are often digitally excluded. Essentially *Looking Local* takes cut down versions of an organisation’s existing web content and represents the material through an array of different digital mediums like;

- Digital Television (Sky, Virgin Media, Youview)
- Web enabled games consoles such as Nintendo Wii
- Smartphones and web enabled mobile phones and apps
- Social media such as Twitter and Facebook

3.2.3 Viewers are offered a menu of information and interactive services based on the “report it, find it, request it” format currently used on the Council website, plus news, service disruption updates, links to partner services and information on the range of Council services.

3.2.4 Current subscribers to *Looking Local* within Scotland include Fife and East Ayrshire Councils, NHS Scotland, and Glasgow Housing Association. An example of what the menu’s can look like for TV and smartphones is illustrated below;

East Ayrshire TV main menu:



List of Request It Services



3.2.5 The Smartphone element also has an App that runs on iphone or android which allows customers to log service requests on the move and which are transmitted to the Council in the form of an email. The smartphone app looks like this;



- 3.2.6 The service is quick to set up with a 6 to 8 week lead time and is easy to maintain as much of the content is extracted from existing web content using similar technology to that which allows our display screen network to broadcast topical web content. A bureau service is available that assists both with the initial set up and regular updates to the site.
- 3.2.7 In taking advice from the Council's Officers who specialise in this area it is apparent that the Council should aspire to offer the type of services being provided by *Looking Local*; *to provide an additional medium for communicating with the council and as business continuity resilience for the web site*. If this option were to be pursued, the Council's Web Team would take a lead on this piece of work, and would be in a position to begin delivering a project of this nature early in the autumn as part of their new Work Programme. The aim would be to have the service in place to assist with winter service disruption information effort. The Project would be delivered in conjunction with and funded from the MGF3 funds already allocated in 2012/13 for the Customer Management Programme for year 3.
- 3.2.8 A summary of the costs which would be involved in taking forward this option are provided below;

Licence (per annum)	£16,000
Bureau Service (per annum)	£ 3,500
Plug In Link Testing (one off)	<u>£ 1,500</u>
	£21,000

The service can be procured on an annual basis, with the effectiveness of the service being evaluated towards the end of the first year to determine whether it is value for money before renewing the contract.

- 3.2.9 It is recommended that this option is pursued within the 2012/13 financial year.

3.3 URTV

- 3.3.1 URTV is a network of social TV news channels which provide a mix of informative and entertaining content to, and about, communities throughout the west coast of Scotland. The platform integrates with social networks such as Twitter and Facebook and an iphone app is available for users to capture and publish news, events and videos. URTV, in simple terms, can be described as a localised version of YouTube, which would allow the Council to have more editorial control over the content which is put into the public domain. Current subscribers to URTV within Scotland include Dumfries and Galloway Council for their new Annandale.tv service.
- 3.3.2 The Transformation Board at their meeting held on 21 November 2011 received a presentation from Brian Keating of URTV in regard to the recent developments that have taken place around Local TV, and how the Council could potentially benefit from using this service to promote positive news. He also presented to SMOG on 13 December 2011, where it was agreed that he would *"return in the New Year with a presentation and proposal to the full Council focussed on more formalised communication arrangement, to include Council news and the broadcast of key Council meetings"*.
- 3.3.2 Further to this, a teleconference between the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Customer Services and Brian Keating took place on 18 January 2012 to clarify the range of options that the Council are currently investigating in terms

of media platforms, and to establish what could be offered by URTV. Arising from this, it was noted that the Council are interested in developing a single strategy that will meet its internal and external digital media requirements, and specifically, which would include the following 4 key areas;

- i. Delivering on Efficiencies
- ii. Communications
- iii. Transparency/Democratic
- iv. Access to Services for Customers

3.3.3 A summary of the proposals, including indicative costs, received from Brian Keating following that teleconference are outlined below;

- URTV can establish a dedicated local TV station for Argyll and Bute Council that can be used to communicate Council developments/achievements and services, and which is owned by the Council and operated as a not-for-profit social enterprise. URTV would license the new channel to use their delivery platform, provide upgrades to the system and software, provide start up and ongoing training/support, assist with the creation of content, and help with network sales.
- URTV staff would assist to recruit, train, and hire a suitable video-journalist/manager for the station, and support the Council to implement the channel.
- URTV platform/software also allows for the streaming of events and meetings taking feed from web cams and allows for moderation and syndication of all content.
- URTV app – the app, which can be used on smartphones, allows customers to send video direct to Council for reporting potholes, litter problems, storm damage etc...
- The cost of setting up a station, which can be fit to broadcast within 60 days is £9,000. This fee is based upon the initial setting up of the station, customisation of software (including i-phone app at £1,200), site design, and one month's full time training for the core employee (£4000). There is also an annual technology fee of £8,000, which includes all data storage, and all upgrade requirements.

Summary of costs;

One off set up costs	£ 9,000
Annual Technology Fee	<u>£ 8,000</u>
	£17,000

3.3.4 The Chief Executive and Executive Director of Customer Services had a further meeting with Brian Keating on 31 July 2012, where 3 revised proposals were submitted in regard to; Council News TV, School News TV and Argyll TV.

3.3.5 It is proposed that a SLWG is convened to look at these new proposals in detail, prior to making a formal decision on whether to proceed.

3.4 **Webcasting**

3.4.1 The Council decision of 18 August 2011 requested that the Chief Executive investigates the provision of webcasting equipment to provide a fixed solution for the Council Chamber.

- 3.4.2 Public-I is considered as a market leader in the provision of these facilities, which are currently used by Moray and Highland Councils in Scotland, as well as Belfast City Council and Buckingham County Council.
- 3.4.3 Indicative costs have been provided by Public-I of £14,000 to £17,000 per annum, depending on a number of factors such as number of hours of material, camera follow and hardware provided. This includes:
- Leased hardware (including maintenance and upgrades);
 - Software licence;
 - Full project and account management;
 - Helpdesk support (including live monitoring of every Council meeting);
 - Full hosting of all content.
- 3.4.4 Supplemental contextual information can be added to provide details of all speakers including biographies. In addition, a range of other functions are provided:
- Index and agenda points can be inserted and Powerpoint attachments to allow slides to be synchronised with a webcast presentation;
 - Viewers can provide feedback via a simple "mailto" form that will send an email to a specified email address for feedback. This can be used to encourage the viewer to comment on the service or on any specific aspect of the meetings they are viewing;
 - A "polling" facility where single questions with a multiple choice answer can be asked;
 - Connect webcasting platform allows for Twitter feeds, live blogs and news feeds to be shown next to Council content and has a chat facility to allow citizens to interact with the proceedings of a meeting.
- 3.4.5 Public-I have indicated that these facilities can be provided within 4 to 6 weeks of placing an order. Definitive pricing would follow a site survey, which will cost £1,200 plus VAT including travel and accommodation expenses – this would be refunded from the first annual cost assuming that the Council place an order. Costs include training of our staff and connection of an audio feed from our sound system.
- 3.4.6 If agreed to roll ahead, the webcasting solution from Public-I, can be implemented without impacting on the investigation/roll out of any of the other options available from Looking Local or URTV. It is also important to note that the roll out of this option would involve some physical changes to the Council Chamber, including the installation of hardware, such as cameras and a possible upgrade of the current microphone/sound system. The site survey carried out by Public-I would include a review of the current equipment/set up and identify any requirements.
- 3.4.7 In addition to the fixed webcasting solution that can be provided by Public-I for the Council Chamber there is also the option of a mobile solution, which, if Members are minded, could be utilised for other meetings such as Area Committees.
- 3.4.8 Public-I have indicated that the costs associated with providing a mobile solution are similar to those quoted for the fixed solution and would be between £14,000 and £17,000 per annum depending on the amount of portable cameras required, but again this would be determined at the site survey. A portable audio solution would also be required for the mobile webcasting solution and

Public-I would normally recommend the purchase of a daisy chain microphone system which consists of around 16 microphones and costs in the region of £8,000 (one off cost).

- 3.4.9 If the Council were minded to roll ahead with the fixed or mobile solution for webcasting, a one year contract initially is proposed which would allow the Council to gain confidence in the system and ensure that it meets all aspirations.
- 3.4.10 There are also a number of other issues which require consideration, should the Council wish to proceed with the webcasting solution from Public-I;
- i. **Type of meetings suitable for webcasting** – where webcasting is in operation within other Councils the meeting style tends to be very tightly managed, formal in nature, and there is limited discussion time for speakers. The Council will need to consider the type of meetings it deems appropriate for webcasting and whether the governance arrangements require to be revised;
 - ii. **Formal Record of Meetings** – the use of webcasting to record proceedings at council meetings will result in a formal record being created, much in the same way as an email, and can be referred to in order to check decisions or information that has been supplied.
 - iii. **Budget** – there is no allocated budget for the provision of webcasting or any of the other media platforms discussed in this paper, and will need to be identified if it is agreed that one or more of the options are rolled out.
- 3.4.11 It is proposed that a SLWG is convened to consider these proposals further, prior to making a formal decision on whether to proceed.

3.5 Video Conferencing

- 3.5.1 As part of the School Estate Review, suggestions were made about making use of video conferencing facilities for local meetings. If the Council were to agree to implement a webcasting solution there would appear to be no further benefit in pursuing this option.
- 3.5.2 If extending the use of VC is an option Members wish to explore there are a number of factors which must be taken into consideration;
- i. **Connection/Technology** – VC facilities can be set up within the Council Chamber using the connection which is currently based within the Housing Meeting Room, Kilmory. This, however, is the only connection that is available and ongoing support from IT is required to re-locate and set up. A number of developments in regard to VC connectivity and equipment are currently being taken forward by IT. For example, work is underway to move away from using ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) telephone lines, supplied to date by BT, as a communication platform for delivering VC, to IP (Internet Protocol) based systems.

Since the introduction of the Pathfinder network, the network is now capable of supporting IP based VC calls, which allows VC sessions to be made without incurring any call charges, offers more functionality such as simultaneous presentation or live screen interaction, and greater reliability over ISDN technology. IP based systems, such as Microsoft Lync, will be utilised for both internal communication between appropriately equipped meeting rooms and staff, and bridge internal IP based VC sessions with all

sites through an external bridge service. Work is still ongoing to develop this area, and will be kept under review by IT.

- ii. **Equipment** - A 360° camera would be required for the Council Chamber, at a cost of £2899 (to be budgeted for), as the current VC camera equipment would not be suitable for large meetings being held within the Chamber.
- iii. **Process/Governance Issues** – Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, and the Council's Standing Orders, provides that the Council must issue a summons to each Member asking that Member to attend the meeting. There must be a minimum number of Members present at the meeting to form a quorum which ensures that the relevant Council business can be undertaken, including any votes that must be taken. However, Section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (*remote participation in and calling of local authority meetings*) provides that any Member may participate in a meeting remotely with the Chairperson's permission. VC has been utilised in the past for some Council meetings such as PPG's and LACPG's which tend to be discursive in nature and are procedurally straightforward, however when considering the use of VC for formal Committee meetings there are issues that require more attention and consideration;
 - Remote chairing of meetings – the skills of the Chair are important in terms of ensuring that those participating remotely are fully included in contentious debate, discussion and voting.
 - Loss of connection - this would make it difficult for the Member(s) attending the meeting remotely to place a vote or participate in discussion. It also raises the question as to whether meetings should be adjourned until such time as the connection is restored or postponed to another day.
 - Issuing of paperwork - there are also issues around the distribution of paperwork which can often be circulated on the day of a meeting, for example, late reports or amendments to complex motions which are often photocopied and circulated at the meeting.

3.5.3 VC is the only option which offers multisite participation, however the range of issues outlined above must be taken into consideration when looking at whether the use of VC should be extended for formal meetings of the Council.

3.5.4 It is proposed that further consideration of VC facilities will form part of the remit of the proposed SLWG.

3.6 Arrangements for monitoring the use of technology

3.6.1 The Council decision of 18 August requested that the Chief Executive puts in place arrangements for monitoring the use of video, webcasting and web conference technology facilities in order to advise the Council on its utilisation by both Officers and Members.

3.6.2 Details can be readily provided, for example on a quarterly basis, of all use of the formal room based video conferencing system and also of the numbers of meetings broadcast via webcasting facilities.

- 3.6.3 Reports can also be run from the Lync system to identify for any period, the number of audiovisual conference calls and the number of participants. However, at present we are unable to distinguish between audio only calls and full video based web conferencing calls (we are working with our Microsoft partners to try to develop the data capture system). Also we are unable to identify the level of sophistication of sharing within these calls, for example whether there is any sharing of desktops for shared presentations or training etc...
- 3.6.4 We can also identify the number of instant messaging conferences. Whilst these are unlikely to replace any travel to face-to-face meetings they do indicate increasing levels of familiarity with Lync and should lead to improved efficiency, and are indicative of general trends for internal communication.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Following the decision taken at the Council on 18 August 2011 to investigate the provision of webcasting equipment within the Council Chamber, a number of digital communication platforms have been explored, including solutions from Looking Local, URTV and Public-I. These options are not mutually exclusive, but rather offer a range of possibilities whereby the Council could increase the number of communication channels that we use to interact with our customers and the general public.
- 4.2 It is recommended that steps are taken to procure the services offered by Looking Local, on the basis that there are resources to take this forward in the current financial year. In respect of URTV, Public-I and VC in general, it is recommended that a SLWG is convened to look at these proposals in further detail.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy - none
- 5.2 Financial – if agreed to pursue Looking Local proposal approx. £21k will be utilised from MGF3 funds allocated for Year 3 of Customer Management Programme
- 5.3 Legal – none
- 5.4 HR - none
- 5.5 Equalities - none
- 5.6 Risk - none
- 5.7 Customer – will allow us to communicate with wider range of Customers and contributes to Customer Management agenda

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February 2012

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