BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to	**Chair and Members of the Democratic Services Committee**
Report Subject	**Webcasting of Committee Meetings**
Report Author	**Head of Policy and Performance Corporate Performance Manager**
Report date	**5th March 2018**
Directorate	**Corporate Services & Strategy**
Executive Portfolio	**Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**
Date of meeting	**29th March 2018**
Date signed off by Monitoring Officer	**N/A**
Date signed off by Section 151 Officer	**N/A**
Date signed off by Chair	**14th March 2018**
Key words	**Democracy Webcasting**

Report Information Summary

1.	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To present the option to scope out arrangements and business case for the provision of webcasting of Council Committee meetings, for future consideration.
2.	**Scope of the Report**
2.1	The report makes reference to previous webcasting arrangements within Blaenau Gwent provides a comparative position with other Local Authorities.
2.2	Options for scoping and business case development to be brought back to the Democratic Services Committee are set out.
3.	**Contribution to the National Well-Being Goals – Detail attached as Appendix 1**
4.	**Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CLT/Committees/Other groups**
4.1	CLT has agreed that this report be brought forward for the Democratic Services Committee to consider, and that a business case be developed if Council approve this option.
5.	**Recommendation/s for Consideration**
5.1	For the Democratic Services Committee to recommend to Council the preferred option as identified in paragraph 6 of the report.

Why this topic is a priority for the Council?					
Single Integrated Plan (SIP)	**Council's Well-being Objectives**	**Performance Management Improvement Framework (PMIF)**	**Transforming Blaenau Gwent (TBG Programme)**	**Relevant legislation**	**Other (please state)**
				Local Government Measure 2011 WBFG Act	

Reporting Pathway							
Directorate Management Team (DMT)	**Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)**	**Audit**	**Democratic Services Committee**	**Scrutiny**	**Executive**	**Council**	**Other (please state)**
15/03/18	*20/03/18*		*29/03/18*			*26/04/18*	*Leadership*

Main Report

1.	**Background and Context**
1.1	**Background** The webcasting of democratic meetings offers a potential for improving how councils engage with their communities.
1.2	Webcasting is now undertaken in most local authorities across Wales. In the main, meetings judged to be of the most interest to the public are webcast, particularly Council, Cabinet (Executive) and Planning Committee meetings. A full breakdown of webcasting in other Welsh Council's is attached at appendix 2.
1.3	Although there is currently no requirement on local authorities to webcast their meetings, it is expected to become a mandatory requirement as part of the Welsh Government's Reforming Local Government Bill.
1.4	The Welsh Government has in the past assisted councils to promote democracy and engagement in local government by providing funding to broadcast council meetings. The total grant available to Blaenau Gwent was £42,000 for webcasting. Following acceptance of the grant the Council agreed a schedule of committee meetings to be webcast, when the existing funding ceased webcasting was discontinued.
2.	**Performance Evidence and Information**
2.1	**WLGA Review of Webcasting** Following the original provision of webcasting, a review was undertaken by the WLGA who found webcasting: • Provides more open and transparent governance and accountability. • Improves public engagement in and understanding of decision making. • Provides easier public access to meetings by minimising travel and allowing more flexible viewing times. • Can facilitate an increased understanding of the democratic functions of a Council by the public in line with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. • Enables the public to access papers and presentations made at the meeting as well as see the meeting footage.

2.2	Across Wales, viewing figures for webcasts vary according to the type of meeting and authority, but generally the number of website hits suggests that there is a real and growing public interest in these broadcasts. Typically, there are more viewings of archived webcasts than live meetings.
2.3	**Blaenau Gwent's Statistics 2014/15**

When Blaenau Gwent had the provision of webcasting we monitored the viewing statistics for every meeting and a snapshot of Blaenau Gwent's viewing figures is provided below, covering 10 meetings in the 2014/15 cycle:

Meeting	No. 'Live' Views	No. 'Archived' Views	Total Length of Viewing
Planning (6/3/14)	33	241	71hrs 53mins
Planning (5/6/14)	7	178	59hrs 21mins
Corporate Overview	8	124	67hrs 10mins
Audit	4	49	16hrs 46mins
Executive	5	207	85hrs 5mins
Education and Skills	3	60	20hrs 35mins
Social Services and Active Living	4	65	21hrs 47mins
Environment, Economy and Infrastructure	6	112	96hrs 33mins
Democratic Services	5	40	16hrs 23mins
Planning (5/5/15)	3	10	4hrs 20mins

Note: These statistics count as unique hits – therefore, anyone from the same IP address going to the webcast several times will still only count as one view.

3.	**Risk Implications**
3.1	**Option 1**

There will be costing implications for webcasting should the scoping of the provision be agreed. These will need to be fully costed and included as part of the business case.

| 3.2 | **Option 2** |

If the provision of webcasting is not approved, the Council will need to be mindful of how it responds to and prepares for any requirements that may be established in relation to the Welsh Government's Reforming Local Government Bill.

4.	**Financial Implications**
4.1	Financial implications will be part of the business case.
5.	**Staffing/Workforce Development Implications**
5.1	Staffing implications will need to be considered as part of the scoping exercise identified in section 4 of the report.
6.	**Options for Consideration**
6.1	**Option 1** That the Democratic Services Committee recommend to Council that a business case for the provision of webcasting is developed and presented to a future meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.
6.2	**Option 2** That the Democratic Services Committee do not recommend to Council that a business case for the provision of webcasting is developed.
7.	**Impact Assessment Against Proposals / Options**
7.1	**Thinking for the long term** The provision of webcasting supports long term thinking as it is expected to become mandatory as part of the White Paper.
7.2	**Collaborative** Other Council's webcast, particularly our partners in the SRS service. There may be opportunities for collaborative arrangements to be established in the future with regard to the provision of webcasting.
7.3	**Involvement** Webcasting supports involvement as it provides a more accessible opportunity for the public to become involved and understand the decision making of the Council.
8.	**Conclusion**
8.1	The provision of webcasting in other Welsh councils is showing to be a key aspect for the public to become involved in the decision making of councils as it provides a more transparent and accessible service.
8.2	Should it be approved for the Council to pursue the provision of webcasting, officers will be tasked with researching all options and providing these to Members at a future meeting of Democratic Services Committee.

Assess how well your project / activity will result in multiple benefits for our communities and contribute to the national well-being goals.		
Description of the Well-being goals	**How will your project / activity deliver benefits to our communities under the national well-being goals?**	**Is there anyway to maximise the benefits or minimise any negative impacts to our communities (and the contribution to the national well-being goals)?**
A prosperous Wales An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.		
A resilient Wales A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).		
A healthier Wales A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.		

Description of the Well-being goals	How will your project / activity deliver benefits to our communities under the national well-being goals?	Is there anyway to maximise the benefits or minimise any negative impacts to our communities (and the contribution to the national well-being goals)?
A more equal Wales A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).	The provision of webcasting will provide an opportunity for people to become more involved with local politics and democracy if they so wish.	Providing Webcasting to as many meetings as possible, within current finnacial restraints.
A Wales of cohesive communities Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.		
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.		
A globally responsible Wales A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.	The public will be able to know of and understand the decision making process as it would be more transparent and accessible.	