



## CABINET – 16TH APRIL 2014

**SUBJECT: RENEWAL OF AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE COUNCIL CHAMBER**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to purchase new Audio Visual equipment for the Council Chamber, Penallta House.
- 1.2 It is recommended that the cost of the replacement equipment is funded from Service Reserves held by Democratic Services.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council Chamber in Penallta House is equipped with audio visual equipment which should enable sound amplification, electronic voting and presentation facilities. The system has proved to be unreliable over a number of years and despite a programme to resolve a number of different problems it has not been possible to find a successful solution. This report recommends replacing the current audio visual system in the Council Chamber.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The report assists in the implementation of the Council's Governance Improvement Action Plan.

### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The current audio visual system was installed in the Council Chamber as part of the design and build contract for the construction of Penallta House. The system is capable of providing sound amplification, electronic voting and presentation facilities. To date the Council has not used the electronic voting functionality, however, Members agreed to implement this and introduce electronic voting as part of the Council's Governance Improvement Action Plan on 23rd April 2013.
- 4.2 The audio visual system has proved to be unreliable for a number of years with numerous audio failures experienced. These problems have included poor audio clarity, a loss of volume, 'feedback', microphone failures, a limited number of microphones being operational and the system experiencing total failure during several meetings.

- 4.3 Following the decision of full Council to implement electronic voting in the Council Chamber, a programme of training and testing was undertaken. Again, several system failures were experienced including; the system deleting pre programmed seating plans, a delay in the electronic voting being available following the opening of a vote, the outcome of a vote being unable to be displayed on the television screens and, on one occasion, the system displayed the correct outcome of a practice vote on the television screens and a different outcome on the delegate units.
- 4.4 The Council accepted a Welsh Government grant of £40,000 to enable webcasting and remote attendance. Webcasting is the process of uploading a video and audio recording of a meeting onto a host website. The recording can be viewed by members of the public in a live or archive environment. Webcasting meetings allow greater openness and transparency of council proceedings and provide an opportunity for the public to understand the background to important local decisions. The purchase of new audio visual equipment would enhance the quality of the Council's webcasting recordings.
- 4.5 A tender exercise was undertaken for a replacement audio visual system, the outcome of each procurement (ex VAT) is outlined below:-
- a. Option 1: Replacement audio visual system without electronic voting - £53,666
  - b. Option 2: Replacement audio visual system with electronic voting - £55,196
  - c. Option 3: Replacement audio visual system with electronic voting and a system to ensure only those Members present can vote - £76,354
- 4.6 It is estimated that equipment installation and officer training will be completed within 8 weeks of contract award.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Improving sound amplification, electronic voting and presentation facilities, along with introducing webcasting and remote attendance, supports improved accessibility of Council proceedings for members, officers and the public, regardless of individual circumstances. This report therefore supports the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives 3, 4, 5 and 7 (Physical Access, Communication Access, Engagement and Participation, Corporate Compliance).

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The financial implications for the replacement of the audio visual equipment are outlined in paragraph 4.5 above. The one off costs associated with the purchase can be funded from Service Reserves.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The introduction of electronic voting will require 2 Committee Service Officers to attend full Council. These additional responsibilities can be accommodated within the existing staffing structure.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses not reflected in this report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That Cabinet agree to:-

- a. The purchase of a replacement audio visual system with electronic voting (option 2).
- b. The purchase of the replacement equipment being funded from Service Reserves held by Democratic Services.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To replace the unreliable audio visual equipment in the Council Chamber and facilitate the implementation of previous Council decisions.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 The Local Government Act 2000

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