

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.****COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING  
22<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER, 2014****REPORT BY: Solicitor to the Council****SUBJECT: Remote Attendance and Webcasting**

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**REPORT FOR: Decision and Information**

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**1. Remote Attendance.**

- 1.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 ("The Measure") and the Local Government Democracy (Wales) Act 2013 ("The Democracy Act") include provisions enabling County Councils to hold meetings at which remote attendance is allowed. Remote attendance is where at least 30% of the Council / committee's membership must be at the place where the meeting is being held e.g. County Hall and the remainder of the Council / committee can "attend" the meeting remotely from other locations i.e. by a video link.
- 1.2 The Measure also requires Councils to make Standing Orders within their Constitutions stating whether the Council will be holding meetings which allow remote attendance to take place. This requirement will require an amendment to both the current Constitution and will need to be included in Part 4 of the New Constitution which will be considered at the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2014.
- 1.3 The question of remote attendance was discussed at the Democratic Services Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2014 as part of the discussion on the new Constitution. The Committee was advised that the decision in relation to the purchase of a new congress system effectively means that Remote Attendance cannot be delivered.
- 1.4 For background the decision taken is that a new congress system is to be implemented in the Chamber and Committee Room A at County Hall. It was also decided that the Video Conference equipment at Welshpool, Llandrindod and Brecon will also be replaced. However a congress system will not be installed in the Chamber at Welshpool (a new mobile system already is in operation here) or in the Committee Room in Brecon (no current provision). This decision was taken due to the cost, and if finance is available in future the provision of equipment at Brecon and Welshpool can be revisited. The effect of the decision in relation to the congress system is that remote attendance cannot currently be delivered, and that the Council / committees will need to continue to meet as at present.
- 1.5 Accordingly, the Council is asked to agree the insertion of wording in both the current Constitution (Part 4, Section 1 – Council Procedure Rules) and Section 4 of the new Constitution under Rule 4.27 that the Council will not undertake Remote Attendance meetings, although acknowledging the value of Remote Attendance.

## **2. Webcasting.**

- 2.1 Welsh Government Ministers with responsibility for Local Government have in pursuit of an agenda to promote democracy and a widening participation in local democracy been advocating a greater use by County Councils of the webcasting of meetings. The most recent development was the Welsh Government White Paper “Devolution, Democracy and Delivery” which indicates that webcasting will become compulsory in future, but as yet the extent that Council are expected to webcast meetings is unknown. County Councils in Wales are seeking clarification from Welsh Government as to the likely requirement arising from this statement.
- 2.2 As the Council is in the process of installing new equipment which will allow it to undertake webcasting from County Hall, it is an appropriate time to commence discussions regarding the level of webcasting which the Council would wish to undertake so that provision can be made for this to happen.
- 2.3 At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> October the Committee was asked for an initial view which could be recommended to Full Council as to what level of webcasting the Council might wish to undertake. In making the recommendation the Committee also asked that officers consult with the Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee and the Cabinet. The Democratic Services Committee is recommending that initially meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and the Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee be webcast dealing with major applications but with the Chairs having the flexibility to determine other meetings to be webcast depending on the content of the meeting. In addition the Chairs of other committees such as Scrutiny Committees would have the flexibility to webcast meetings again depending on the content of the meeting.
- 2.4 If the Council is content with this initial approach, officers should be tasked to consider the provision of resources to deliver the Council’s wishes with a further report being presented to the Democratic Services Committee to ensure that provision is available in the Council’s budget for the forthcoming financial year.
- 2.5 The Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee considered the matter on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2014. However there was no definitive view expressed as to the way forward. The Cabinet’s view will be reported orally to Full Council.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<b>That the Council:</b>  <b>(i) Approve that the Council will not undertake Remote Attendance Meetings (although acknowledging the value of it) and that this be included in both Part 4, Section 1 of the current Constitution and Rule 4.27 in the new Constitution.</b>  <b>(ii) Provide an indication of the meetings it wishes to be webcast</b>	<b>(i) To seek Council’s view regarding the undertaking of Remote Attendance Meetings.</b>  <b>(ii) To seek the Council’s view on the webcasting of Council meetings.</b>

**and tasks officers to ensure that resources are made available in the Council's budget to deliver the webcasting of Council meetings.**

