

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date	2 July 2013
Subject	Broadcasting of Meetings and Remote Attendance
Lead Officer(s)	Interim Head of Democratic Services

A – Introduction / Background / Issues

Background

There has been a lot of debate recently amongst Welsh Local Authorities about the potential for webcasting and allowing remote attendance at Council meetings. Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure legislates for remote attendance at meetings and whilst there is no specific legislation for webcasting it is linked to the provisions to strengthen local democracy.

The debate has been further fuelled by an offer of grant funding by the Welsh Government in relation to 'Broadcasting of Council meetings and Community Council Websites'.

The Minister has not legislated in the area of webcasting but he has the powers to do so. The broadcasting of meetings is linked to the provisions within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to strengthen local democracy; the intention is to strengthen the structures and working of local government in Wales at all levels and to ensure that local Councils reach out to, and engage with, all sectors of the community they serve. The Measure aims to promote local democracy and be more inclusive of the public's input and engagement.

Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, requires principal council to allow for remote attendance at Council meetings, in other words, all member do not have to be present at the principal meeting place in order to participate in the meeting. Draft guidance has now been received and is subject to consultation.

Grant

In January 2013, the Minister for Local Government and Communities wrote to all Local Authorities on the issue of promoting local democracy and public engagement. Each principal council has been allocated £40,000 to assist with broadcasting and remote attendance plus an extra £500 for each Community Council to support the establishment of Community Council websites. The grant allocation needs to be spent during 2013/14. There is no guarantee of grant funding for future years.

By accepting the grant the Isle of Anglesey County Council have agreed to:-

Action	Timescale	Evidence
To broadcast all/or some of the Council's meetings	31 March 2014	Web casting on the Council's website
Provide finance to community councils to assist with the development of their websites	31 March 2014	Number of Community Councils with websites
Arrange remote access for elected members	31 March 2014	Written report noting the number of such meetings held, and an assessment of their success

Welsh Authorities current position

There are a number of English Local Authorities that regularly webcast their Council meetings, but in Wales some authorities webcast meetings including:

- **Cardiff** webcasts their Council meetings only (hosted by Public-i)
- **Powys** has used Public-i for meetings of high public interest – about 6-8 meetings so far and on-line viewing figures are rising.
- **Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority** webcast all their major meetings using a system provided by Public-i, on an 18 month pilot, funded by the Information Commissioners Office.

Welsh Local Authorities are now considering their position as a result of the Measure and the offer of grant funding.

Broadcasting of Meetings

At present audio recordings of proceedings at the Planning Committee are posted to the Council website and this has not been extended to other Committees.

With regard to Webcasting of meetings, there are various issues, technical and non-technical that need to be addressed in order to take full advantage of webcasting Council meetings and future requirements in relation to remote access. These aspects are currently being explored by Officers and preparation of a business case.

Website for Community Councils

The second element of this grant is the £500 allocation for each Community Council to develop websites. Earlier this month further clarification was received from Welsh

Government on the allocation earmarked for each community council. This will be discussed further with One Voice Wales.

Recommendation

That the Interim Head of Democratic Services and Heads of ITC submit proposals to the next meeting.

Huw Jones
Interim Head of Democratic Services
03/06/13