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ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to	Standards Committee
Date	12 June 2013
Subject	Broadcasting of Meetings
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.

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. In utilising this grant Welsh Government have set a number of targets including broadcasting all/some Council meetings and arranging for remote attendance by Councillors at Council meetings by 31st March 2014. With regard to remote access, Welsh Government have recently issued draft guidance for consultation.

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, and the grant allocation this will be reported to the Democratic Services Committee as part of its current work programme. 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.

Website for Community Councils

The Local Democracy Bill includes a requirement for all Community Councils to develop websites. There is an expectation for the Council to collaborate with One Voice Wales to discuss how the grant provision element for Community Council websites should be coordinated and further guidance from One Voice Wales is awaited.

Recommendation

The Standards Committee is requested to note the information in this report.

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