

## **Cabinet**

**Thursday 5 December 2024**

### **Upgrading Audiovisual Capabilities in the Council Chamber**

**Lead Officer: Chief Executive**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Digital**

**Confidentiality: Open**

**Non-Exempt**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report requests access to the Council Chamber Audio Reserve to fund upgrading the Council Chamber's audiovisual capabilities and environment. Such an upgrade is essential for maintaining meeting broadcast capabilities.

### **Recommendation**

2. Cabinet authorises the release of up to £15k from the Council Chamber Audio Reserve to enable the upgrading of the Council's audiovisual capabilities in the Council Chamber

### **Background**

3. The Council successfully utilises Microsoft Teams Rooms to facilitate its committee webcasting and meeting management. This platform offers integrated high-definition video, audio, and content sharing, catering to meetings of all sizes. It enables anyone to join from anywhere, across various devices, making connecting and collaborating with participants easy. This setup is particularly ideal for hybrid meetings. It is a proven success.

### **Main Issues**

4. The current Teams Room setup has been in operation for three and a half years, but support and maintenance for this system ended in May of this year. Furthermore, the system is incompatible with Windows 11, requiring an upgrade to meet the Council's operational needs. Several significant issues have recently arisen, including a severe incident where the stream stopped working completely. In other instances, the system's functionality has only been restored just before meetings, often through trial and error.
5. The Council has been fortunate to experience only minor streaming interruptions so far. However, without an upgrade, the system will continue to deteriorate, becoming unstable and unable to broadcast essential Council meetings to the public reliably. Additionally, the current system will not be able to support or develop remote access if the Government's proposals for remote meetings and voting are implemented. Without the proposed upgrade, the Council will face a significant loss of operational functionality in the future.

### **The Proposal**

6. The proposed solution entails upgrading to a new Teams Room that operates on Windows 11 and is compatible with Teams Room Premium, which provides enhanced functionality. The quotation includes a three-year hardware

replacement and managed room service, enabling an external support company to monitor and analyse the system's performance remotely. It would also allow the Council to develop remote voting, vote re-runs, casting votes, and identify speakers. All of this would benefit both members and the public.

### **Corporate Governance Considerations**

7. The proposal aligns with the goals and objectives outlined in the recently adopted Digital Strategy. It was developed in consultation with the IT Manager and complies with and complements the council's evolving IT environment.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

8. The Finance Team and the S151 Officer confirm that the necessary funding is available in the Council Chamber Audio reserve (R0067), which holds an amount of £15k that was set aside in 2021, anticipating future replacement being necessary. The total cost of implementing an upgraded Teams Room is just under £11k, allowing for contingency, Cabinet is requested to approve the use of the full balance.

#### Risk Management

9. The current risk is that the existing system fails, and the Council cannot deliver its broadcasting or remote access to its committee meetings.
10. Upgrading to a new, fully managed, and supported Teams Room environment poses little risk to the council.

### **Equalities**

11. The proposal is unlikely to raise diversity or equality issues.

### **Action**

12. Subject to Cabinet approval to release the necessary funds, the project will be commissioned immediately, with the updated audiovisual capability in place very early in the new year.

**Contact Details: Matthew Saunders, Operations, Data, and Customer Services Manager.**