

SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

17 April 2009

Report of the Chief Executive and Treasurer

WEBCASTING

1. Purpose of the Report

To seek approval to enter into a 3 year contract for webcasting on behalf of all South Yorkshire Joint Authorities.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- a) Approve the continuation of webcasting Police Authority meetings for the next 3 years;**
 - b) Commence a tendering process by the Authority on behalf of all four South Yorkshire Joint Authorities to seek a webcasting service for 3 years (paragraph 9).**
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3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Authority has twice approved webcasting of its meetings. On 23 February 2007 it approved a one year pilot. On 18 April 2008 it agreed a renewal for a further year. The contract with Public-i which provides the webcasting service requires 3 months notice of any change. This notification would be due by 1 June 2009.

4. Viewing

- 4.1 The Authority has webcast 24 meetings in 2008/9 compared to 12 in 2007/08. The respective statistics for the number of viewings is: 3,290 for 2008/09 and 2,370 for 2007/08; it should be noted that the statistics for 2007/08 are only for a 6 month period.
- 4.2 The statistics for all Joint Authorities' webcasts are shown below. Where total viewings exceed live & archive viewings combined, this is because viewers click on a webcast before it starts.

The figures for 2007/08 are greater than those reported in May 2008 as the archive viewings increase over time.

	2008/09				2007/08 (6 months)			
	No of Webcasts	Total viewings	Live	Archive	No of Webcasts	Total viewings	Live	Archive
Police	24	3290	406	2862	12	2370	262	2091
Fire	16	2344	250	2080	8	1596	173	1419
Transport	14	1600	159	1439	7	1197	107	1088
Pensions	7	870	123	747	3	604	31	542
Total	62	8104	938	7128	30	5767	573	5140

4.3 Appendix A (below) lists viewings by webcast.

5. Development

- 5.1 There have been technical advances in the webcasting software over the past year, which have improved the efficiency of operating a webcast.
- 5.2 The viewer will also have noticed an improved player which is more interactive and easy to interpret.
- 5.3 ‘Tagging’ of webcasts enables viewers to follow the thread of a particular debate over several meetings, and an automatic alert (RSS Feed) is available to the viewer who wants to keep informed about a particular subject.

6. Promotion

- 6.1 Webcasting has been promoted through *Serving You* (July 2008) and the annual *Precepts and Levies* leaflet (March 2009) which is distributed with council tax statements.
- 6.2 During Local Democracy Week (October 2008) the Authority (along with the South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue and Integrated Transport Authorities) staged three “Question Time” sessions with local school students. The sessions were webcast and were featured by the professional Association for Citizenship Teaching.
- 6.3 Local Government Yorkshire & Humber nominated webcasting by the Joint Authorities in the annual *Making a Difference Annual Awards* (November 2008).
- 6.4 Both participatory budgeting events have been recorded. The Barnsley event (November 2008) has been edited into a short video. Seven media studies students videoed the Rotherham event (March 2009), which will be promoted nationally.
- 6.5 The South Yorkshire Joint Authorities are leading the way in promoting webcasting, raising the profile of the Joint Authorities. There have been visits by officers and members from other local authorities to find out more on webcasting: Barnsley Council (February 2008), which begins

webcasting in 2009/10; West Midlands (September 2008) and West Yorkshire Police Authorities (pending) and Sheffield City Council (March 2009).

We have had enquiries from Humberside Police Authority (May 2008) and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (March 2009).

In addition, a Webcasting Open Day was held for 40 people from more than 20 authorities in northern England with others following online (January 2009).

- 6.6 Members have been provided with 2 bulletins on webcasting developments (September 2008 & March 2009).

7. 2008/09 Costs

- 7.1 The Authority has incurred direct costs of £6,600 for its share of the webcasting contract in the past year (Total cost £16,100). Additionally, the proportionate cost of the ASDL connection to the internet on which the webcast is streamed was £730 (Total cost £1,800).
- 7.2 Whilst staff time for operating the webcasts is charged to the Authority, it is largely an opportunity cost in that the three staff that operates the webcasts are doing so in place of other work they may or have previously done for the Authority.

8. Government

- 8.1 A White Paper *Communities in control: real people, real power* (July 2008) stated government wanted to raise the visibility of the scrutiny function. Authorities are being encouraged to consider new approaches to scrutiny, including webcasting.
- 8.2 The White Paper signalled the intention to place a duty to promote democracy on local authorities. This means that local authorities should no longer be seen as just units of local administration, but as vibrant hubs of local democracy, with a statutory duty to promote democratic understanding and participation. Local councils were to be empowered to present themselves as democratic centres, with a new culture which sees democratic politics respected, recognised and valued.
- 8.3 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction (LDEDC) Bill will extend a "duty to inform, consult and involve" local people in day to day work and major decision making to fire and police authorities.
- 8.4 There are specific performance indicators looking at citizen involvement and how well people feel they can influence local decision-making, which Local Area Agreements can include. And Comprehensive Area Assessment will give significant weight to how

thoroughly and efficiently local people are informed, consulted and involved, becoming a major driver of the empowerment agenda.

9. Tender

- 9.1 A three year contract for webcasting is now proposed, which will cover the period 1 September 2009 until 31 August 2012. This will give some stability to webcasting and will allow the development of plans to exploit the technology further.
- 9.2 The approximate total value of a three year contract is £51,000 (£17,000 per year) of which the Authority would pay a proportion, dependent on the number of meetings webcast.
- 9.3 The tender will proceed on the basis that the three other Joint Authorities agree to continue webcasting. Where anyone authority chooses not to continue webcasting, the matter will be referred to the Chairs' Group for reassessment of the tender.
- 9.4 A full tender exercise is proposed which South Yorkshire Police Supply Chain Management have been approached to carry out on our behalf.

10. Plans

- 10.1 The adoption of a longer contract will facilitate a greater exploitation of the platform to support the Authority. This includes use of the equipment for short videos and podcasts and interactive tools such as polls and feedback.
- 10.2 It is also planned to significantly increase viewing figures by forward identification of issues on the agenda and alerting individuals, groups and organisations who may be interested in particular issues.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Webcasting provides a means of increasing stakeholder involvement at a marginal cost. With very occasional public attendance at meetings, the availability of the webcast on the internet allows access to debates about major issues. And the value for money of the physical meeting is increased by its availability online for 6 months after it has taken place.
- 11.2 Video, in particular, is direct, compelling and easy to use. It transcends problems of literacy and brings a directness and authenticity to communication which is essential to build trust in the democratic process and engaging people in democracy.
- 11.4 Community cohesion can all too easily become a casualty in an economic downturn or crisis. It therefore becomes extremely important to find ways to make decision-making more transparent and accessible to local communities (e.g., webcasting). The more people are directly

involved or see others from their communities involved in decisions on the allocation of resources (e.g., participatory budgeting, which can be strengthened by using webcasting and social technologies) and the choice of priorities, the more willing they are likely to be to accept the outcomes as fair and reasonable.

- 11.5 Webcasting and the social technologies with which it can be associated do not present a “magic bullet” to solve the difficult issues of democratic engagement. However together they offer a cost effective tactical process for authorities to make more inclusive decisions.

12. Financial Implications

- 12.1 The estimated annual cost and apportionment if all four joint authorities approve a three year webcasting contract is as follows:

Police	Fire	ITA	Pensions	Total
£7,000	£4,250	£3,900	£1,850	£17,000

- 12.2 Budgetary provision of £11,000 has been made within the 2009/10 revenue estimates, which allows flexibility in the event that any of the other joint authorities decide not to approve a three year contract.

- 12.3 A similar budgetary provision will be made for 2010/11 onwards.

13. Other Implications and Risks

- 13.1 The report has set out the possible financial and diversity implications.

- 13.2 There are no crime and disorder implications.

- 13.3 There is a low risk of legal action. This relates to the potential of defamatory statements by members of the Authority which are subsequently transmitted by webcast. However, the Authority has a policy to remove potentially defamatory statements from the archive copy of the webcast. The Authority’s insurers have also stated the current liability policies will provide an indemnity in respect of any claims arising out of the webcast transmissions of Authority meetings.

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at the South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat, Barnsley.

Other sources and references:

Davy Jones Consultancy & Public-i (2009) *Making technology work for Participatory Budgeting*. White paper. 1/4/09. Private circulation. Brighton: Public-i.

Department of Communities & Local Government (2008) *Communities in control: real people, real power*. White paper. 9/7/08. London: DCLG. [www.communities.gov.uk – accessed 1/4/09]

House of Lords (2008) *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill [HL]*. Printed 4th December 2008. London: House of Lords. [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldbills/002/2009002.pdf – accessed 6/4/09]

Appendix A

List of webcast viewings 2008/9

		Total	Live	Archive
Authority	06-Mar-09	85	13	72
Authority	27-Feb-09	105	37	68
Authority	09-Jan-09	69	11	58
Authority	12-Dec-08	112	21	91
Authority	24-Oct-08	110	20	90
Authority	26-Sep-08	122	17	105
Authority	04-Jul-08	291	26	246
Authority	18-Apr-08	182	21	161
Authority Annual Meeting	06-Jun-08	196	21	175
Audit Committee	13-Feb-09	68	14	54
Audit Committee	26-Sep-08	131	18	113
Audit Committee	06-Jun-08	177	6	171
Business Support Committee	16-Jan-09	69	15	54
Business Support Committee	17-Oct-08	86	15	71
Business Support Committee	18-Jul-08	140	8	132
Business Support Committee	25-Apr-08	144	31	113
ABC Awards Celebration	31-Oct-08	205	17	188
Community Affairs Committee	30-Jan-09	118	14	104
Community Affairs Committee	07-Nov-08	138	14	124
Community Affairs Committee	22-Aug-08	163	16	147
Performance Committee	06-Feb-09	96	4	91
Performance Committee	21-Nov-08	202	12	190
Performance Committee	05-Sep-08	137	16	119
Performance Committee	23-May-08	144	19	125
Total	24	3290	406	2862