

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Finance Committee	17 February 2015
<b>Subject:</b> Filming of Committee Meetings – request for funding from the Finance Committee contingency fund	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk and Chamberlain	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

The City of London Corporation has always allowed the public and the media to record its public meetings, and this is now a legal right. Currently, while the public intermittently films meetings, the Corporation itself does not do so as a matter of course and has no audiovisual copy of its own. Therefore, for any meetings which the public has filmed, a definitive filmed copy of the meeting exists without the City of London Corporation always also having a copy.

At the request of Members, the Town Clerk and the Chamberlain have investigated the potential for the Corporation to invest in a system to record the public portion of a meeting. This led to the creation of a Request For Quotation (RFQ) document which was circulated to appropriate suppliers. This RFQ process led to one tender being received for the High Definition filming of meetings. This tender set out a cost of £33,314 for the first year, with an ongoing cost of £7,725 for the licence and support and maintenance (a total of £48,764 over three years). The alternative is to lease the system, at an initial cost of £20,214 in the first year, with an ongoing cost of £11,025 for license, support and maintenance and lease of the equipment (a cost of £42,264 over three years). There will be an additional cost for the storage of recordings, which will be processed through the existing Agilisys IS contract.

Following consultation between Town Clerk's and Chamberlain's, given the lower three-year cost of leasing the system, it is recommended that if Members did wish to pursue the recording of meetings, leasing the system would be likely to be the most cost-effective long term option.

There is currently no budget provision for this project. If the Committee wishes to pursue this project funding would need to come from the Finance Committee's City's Fund Contingency Budget.

The report requests the Committee to come to a view as to whether to accept the quotation for the installation of filming equipment within the Committee Rooms. There do not appear to be any viable alternatives if Members do wish to pursue the filming of meetings.

### Recommendation:

That the Committee decides whether to allocate £42,264 from the Committee's City Fund Contingency (£20,214 in 2015/16, £11,025 in 2016/17 and £11,025 in 2017/18)

for the leasing of a system to allow the High Definition filming of Committee meetings.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City of London Corporation has always allowed the public and the media to record its public meetings.
2. As the cost of technology has fallen rapidly it is much more common for members of the public to use (and view) recordings, especially digital video recordings, using a wide variety of equipment and platforms, some easily seen as cameras, others in phone format.
3. On 6 August 2014 The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 were brought into law. These regulations enshrined the right for the press and public to film and digitally report from all public meetings of local government bodies.
4. This law was discussed during the passage of the Local Audit and Accountability Bill through Parliament, and so in advance of the law coming into force, on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 the Court of Common Council approved a new protocol for the Filming and Recording of Public Meetings.

### **Current Position**

5. The current protocol for the public to film meetings is in line with the requirements of the law. The Committee and Members Services staff ensure that any members of the public attending meetings with the intention of filming proceedings are issued with a copy of the protocol. Members are also made aware at every meeting that there is the potential for a member of the public to film the meeting.
6. However, no records are kept of when members of the public attend meetings to film proceedings. It is estimated that fewer than fifteen meetings have been filmed by the public since the implementation of the Filming Protocol in May 2014. Videos of nine meetings have been uploaded onto YouTube.
7. The filming of meetings has not led to any disruption of the business of the meeting; the filming has been unobtrusive and the members of the public have left once the motion to exclude the public has been passed.
8. The issue which arises is that currently, the person filming the meeting is in possession of the only copy of the proceedings of the public part of the meeting. While the minutes remain the legal record of what took place at the meeting, there is potential for Members' comments made during a public meeting to be presented without context which might lead to misinterpretation. There would also be some potential for the recording to be digitally manipulated.

### **Proposals**

9. Therefore, it seems sensible for the City of London Corporation to have a simple but reliable system to allow meetings to be filmed by the Corporation.

This will allow the Corporation to make an unedited copy of the proceedings of a public meeting in the event that there is any dispute. Recordings would not be used to supplement the minutes in any way.

10. Given this, meetings took place between the Town Clerk's, City Surveyor's Chamberlain's Departments to determine the requirements for the system and therefore the scale and scope of the work.
11. The requirements to ensure adequate recording of meetings with minimal potential for disruption of meetings are:
  - The system must be present in Committee Rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the Second Floor, West Wing of Guildhall.
  - The video system must ensure that all Members and Officers are recognisable when speaking at the public meeting. Given the quality of recordings that have been uploaded to YouTube, it would be appropriate for any system installed by the City's to be at least the same quality (meaning that High Definition cameras would be required).
  - The audio system must ensure that all speech from Members and Officers is audible, whether they are using the microphone system or not.
  - The system must have a clear indication of when recording is taking place.
  - The system must be easily operable by the Committee Clerk by remote control to ensure no disruption to the meeting.
  - The system should store meetings for an appropriate period of time and allow these recordings to be easily accessible by the Committee and Member Services Team.
12. Based on these requirements, a RFQ document was developed. This RFQ identified the required scope of the work. The RFQ was circulated to four appropriate suppliers. Prospective suppliers were given the opportunity to tour the Committee Rooms in the Second Floor of the West Wing of the Guildhall and were advised that the City of London Corporation was seeking the most economically advantageous option.
13. Only one quotation was received from those companies approached. This outlined that a system to allow the High Definition filming of meetings in each of the Committee Rooms in line with the specification set out above would cost £48,764 over 3 years (if the system is purchased) or £42,264 over three years (if the system is leased).
14. This is a significant amount of money. However, given the requirements for the system to provide a credible alternative to any footage recorded by members of the public, and the robust procurement process which has been undertaken, it appears that this is simply the market value for such a system.
15. Currently, there is no funding in place for the implementation of this project. Therefore, it is requested that the Finance Committee approves an allocation of £42,264 from the Committee's City's Fund Contingency (£20,214 in 2015/16, £11,025 in 2016/17 and £11,025 in 2017/18) for this project.
16. During the development of the requirements, consideration was also given as to whether the system which is procured should also have the capability to

live-stream meetings to the internet. Although there is currently no intention to live-stream meetings, it seems sensible to consider this as a future option, if a recording system is being procured now.

17. The proposed system has the hardware the capability to live-stream all meetings in the West Wing of the Guildhall. Activating this functionality would cost an additional £21,375 per year. There would be no physical amendments required to the proposed system to 'go live' with streaming. However, it is not proposed to pursue the option to provide for the streaming of meetings at this time. It is, however, a significant benefit of the proposed system that it is relatively 'future proof' in this regard. As technology develops, later platforms may become cheaper.
18. If approved, it is hoped that the system could be installed and tested around Easter 2015, ensuring that the system is fully in place for the start of the Corporation's new municipal year.

### **Implications**

19. **Public Relations** As technology develops rapidly, more and more parts of any entity rise to the surface and to public view via digital platforms. While this proposed system is not required for current active media management, it would be a useful additional way of helping to manage the developing technology. Some local councils now have similar arrangements.
20. **Financial** The proposed contract covers the filming of Committee meetings over the next three years. There is not currently any budget provision within either Town Clerk's Department or Chamberlain's Department for this system. Therefore, it is appropriate that the Finance Committee's City Fund Contingency is used to fund this.

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