

## **COUNCIL - 10 DECEMBER 2013**

### **LOCATION OF COUNCIL MEETING – APRIL 2014**

Report by Director for Environment & Economy and County Solicitor  
& Head of Law & Culture

#### **Introduction**

1. In September, Council said it would welcome the opportunity to hold its April 2014 meeting at Bodicote House, Banbury. This is because the Council wishes to test out the webcasting capability at Bodicote House with a view to extending electronic access to County Council meetings in County Hall. Council asked for a feasibility study into the potential for this. This report provides that study and recommends that the trial take place.

#### **Background**

2. The County Council recognises the importance of increasing access to meetings both physically and electronically. Many authorities facilitate electronic access through the webcasting of meetings whereby the meeting is recorded and then broadcast on the authorities' websites. As Cherwell District Council already have webcasting facilities, it was considered cost-effective to trial the use of an existing system before obtaining one for the County Council. Such a pilot would also enable members to experience the use of webcasting at first hand, thereby enabling an informed decision on future plans.
3. Following a motion from Councillor Mallon to this effect, approved by the Council (minute number 65/13), Cherwell District Council have been approached with a view to the 1 April 2014 County Council meeting taking place at Bodicote House. This report outlines the practicalities and the cost considerations of doing so.

#### **Practicalities**

4. The practicalities arising from this proposal can be grouped under the following headings:
  - Capacity of Bodicote House;
  - Webcasting capability;
  - Parking and transport.

Capacity of Bodicote House:

5. Cherwell District Council normally structure their chamber to accommodate 50 councillors plus attending officers. It has been confirmed that additional space could be created, as here, to accommodate 61 county councillors and with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Officers supporting the Chairman can also be accommodated at the front of the meeting with directors accommodated separately below. Group rooms can be made available for the three main political groups to accommodate the group meetings prior to the start of Council. The Chairman's room at Bodicote can also be made available to the Chairman of this Council on the day.
6. There is also capacity in the public gallery for members of the public to attend and space for the press.

Webcasting capability:

7. The webcasting facilities at Cherwell District Council can be configured to the layout required. Bodicote House has been used successfully by other organisations for webcasting purposes. It is also possible for the recording of the meeting to be linked directly to the County Council's website, live and historically. The actual recording is facilitated by a retained webcasting operator who ensures the camera is directed to the person speaking. The operator also controls the microphones (one between two), so that the audio-feed clearly picks up the person speaking.

Parking and transport:

8. There is only limited parking at Bodicote House. It would not be feasible to replicate the current degree of Council Day/County Hall parking without specifically hiring additional spaces, potentially from the adjacent amenity of Banbury Cricket Club, opposite Bodicote House. Disabled parking spaces could be reserved, if needed. Alternatively, it is possible to hire transport to take councillors from County Hall to Bodicote House. While this would still necessitate the usual journeys to County Hall, it would have the advantage of minimising the individual journeys, in terms of additional cost and environmental impact. The cost implications are in paragraphs 9-11 below.

## **Financial implications**

9. The cost implications for the Council include the following:
  - Hire of Bodicote Council Chamber and Rooms: £355;
  - Hire of webcasting operator: £200 max;
  - Additional car park reservations: £75;
  - Coach: £400.
10. There will also be implications for the payment of members' travel claims. The total amount claimed for an average council meeting would be in the region of £387: if transport is provided this is likely to remain, with the addition of approximately £400 for transport hire, for example through the Integrated Transport Unit. If no transport is provided, then this is likely to increase with

onward mileage to and from Banbury and longer train journeys – amounting, potentially, to at least an additional £450. The cost of refreshments would fall within existing budgets.

11. Further options are being considered with the Council's transport partners, with a view to making further savings on the costs indicated.
12. Taking all potential costs into account, the maximum likely to be incurred over and above the cost of holding a meeting at County Hall, is in the region of £1,500.

## **Conclusion**

13. Bodicote House is available for use on 1 April and can be configured to the requirements of the County Council. The meeting is capable of being webcast and a recording of the meeting can be hosted on this Council's website. The transport implications can be resolved through the provision of a coach, if needed. The financial implications, all considered, are not prohibitive.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

14. **Council is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - (a) **agree in principle to hold its April 2014 meeting at Bodicote House, Banbury;**
  - (b) **ask the County Solicitor & Head of Law and Culture and the Director for Environment & Economy to make the necessary arrangements with Cherwell District Council for holding the meeting at Bodicote House and to liaise with the Chairman of the Council and with Group Leaders to finalise these.**

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COUNTY SOLICITOR AND HEAD OF LAW & CULTURE

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Background Papers: None

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