

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: AUDIO RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS
Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL
Date: 7 OCTOBER 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND HOUSING SERVICES

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to formalise the arrangements for recording Council meetings.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following a decision by Council in December 2013 audio recordings have been made of Council meetings. Copies of recordings are made available routinely to Group Leaders and, on request, to other elected members and the public.
- 2.2 A local audio visual company, Tapestry AV, of Grangemouth, has been used to record each meeting of Council. The first recorded meeting was on 12 March 2014. To date, 15 meetings have been recorded.
- 2.3 The cost of recording a meeting is approx. £450-£600 (including VAT).
- 2.4 The arrangement with Tapestry AV is that the Council contracts on a meeting by meeting basis. The unit cost of recording, which has remained unchanged, has never been tested in the market.

3. FUTURE ACTIONS

- 3.1 The Leaders of the Administration and of the Opposition met, on 9 June 2015, to discuss the pilot thus far and to consider how Council's decision could be taken forward.
- 3.2 Both Councillors Martin and Meiklejohn considered that there was a benefit to elected members in having meetings recorded and recognised that there were benefits for officers, particularly when preparing the minutes of meetings. They both supported continuation of the project.
- 3.3 Thus far, access to the recordings has been limited, as set out in paragraph 2.1 above. However, both Group Leaders emphasised the benefits, in terms of accessibility and transparency, of making the recordings more widely available and took the view that any continuation of the pilot should allow public access to them. It has been confirmed that audio files can be created on the Council website and posted shortly after the meetings take place.

- 3.4 It should be noted that public access to recordings will not include any items of business taken in private, as these are covered by the provisions in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 in relation to the publication of exempt or confidential information.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The current cost of recording a meeting is approximately £450-600 depending on the duration of the meeting. Since March 2014, the total cost incurred has been £6,700.
- 4.2 Should Council decide to formalise the arrangements the cost would be approximately £3,600 for a full financial year, based on 6 scheduled meetings. That cost would increase if, in addition, special meetings are called. The cost for 2015/16 can be met from current budgets and the Chief Finance Officer has confirmed that the necessary funding could be provided for in 2016/17. It would not be proposed at this stage to extend any contract beyond 2016/17 to accommodate plans for the new Council HQ.
- 4.3 Any recording contract would be entered into consistent with the requirements of Contract Standing Orders.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Council is invited to:

- 1) agree to the audio recording of Council meetings for the period to 31 March 2017 in consequence of which the Director of Corporate and Housing Services will make the necessary arrangements consistent with the requirements of Contract Standing Orders; and
- 2) consider whether to post audio recordings of the public parts of Council meetings on the Council's website.

.....
Director of Corporate and Housing Services
Ref: AAC071015 – Audio Recording of Council Meetings
Date: 10 September 2015

Contact Officer: Brian Pirie, Tel: 01324 506110

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Recording of Council Meetings LA\GN\198