Council Chamber audio-visual modernisation	24th November 2020
Corporate Policy and Resources Committee	

Linkage to Council Strategy	
Strategic Theme	Innovation and Transformation
Outcome	Improved service efficiency
Lead Officer	Patrick Mc Colgan
Cost: (If applicable)	

1.0 Introduction

Since March 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in Council not being able to facilitate full meetings in the Chamber. The new arrangement means that Members have either fully virtual meetings or have a small number of Members in the Chamber and other Members at home in a hybrid setup. A limited number of Members and officials are located, primarily in the Council Chamber, to facilitate both setups.

Given that there is unlikely to be change in this new working environment for the foreseeable future, Members may wish to examine ways in which further equipment may be acquired to improve the smooth running of these meetings. This report makes recommendations on the acquisition of such kit.

2.0 Background

Since the Council's inception in 2015, the Chamber has been equipped with a number of technologies to aid the effectiveness of meetings. These include the Bosch speaker system and data projectors to illustrate various documents, with a multi-control unit to manage these technologies and other peripheral kit such as lighting and curtains.

In March 2020, in response to the Covid 19 crisis, Council acquired computer software product Microsoft Teams to facilitate Member virtual meetings. In addition, 2 cameras were also purchased to allow other Members to link into the meeting from a home environment.

One camera focuses on the top table of the Chamber, specifically on the Chair of the meeting and Council officials. The second camera focuses on the other Members who are physically attended the meeting.

This technological arrangement, constructed in a period of uncertainty and disruption, was adequate in the short term. However, there is a growing appreciation that further technology would result in a more professional experience, particularly important if Council decides to live stream the full Council and Committee meetings.

3.0   Challenges

Cameras

Currently a temporary setup with two conference cameras in the Council Chamber, one pointing to the top table and a second wide-angle camera covering the rest of the room (see Appendix 1).

These cameras are:
- limited in quality, functionality and ability due to the conference camera features.
- purpose built for a small/medium size meeting room.
- the wide-angle camera does not show enough detail of the room or participants in the meeting.

The cameras are located some 10 metres from their subjects to encapsulate either the top table or the other Members. This means that the quality of the imagery is limited.

Sound quality

The Chamber Bosch speaker system allows the Chair to provide permission for contributors to speak. Separately, in a home environment, Members who wish to speak indicate to the Chair via the Teams chat feature. However, there is minimal integration between these 2 systems, making the role of chairing meetings more challenging.

There is also an interference noise, both before and during the meeting.

Data projectors

Data Projectors are not directly linked to the issues of virtual meetings. However, given the likely integration of all the technologies, it would be timely to consider this issue. The complexity of imagery increasingly requiring to be displayed in the Chamber means that the current Data Projectors are no longer fit for purpose.

The above factors make the role of the Chair substantially more challenging than in the previous full Chamber experience.

4.0   **Recommended solutions.**

1   Acquisition of Sony cameras, Bosch speaker enhancements and associated technologies that allows integration between the Bosch system and MS Teams.

2   Acquisition of enhanced Panasonic data projectors and associated cabling to improve the quality of imagery in the Chamber.

5.0   Costs

Initial Costs

Camera and Speaker System	
Bosch DCN conference software, including parliamentary voting and microphone management software	£6045.70
3 Sony SRG 300SE cameras	£6,900.00
Associated camera software for Bosch/Sony integration	£5,522.00
Cabling, installation and commissioning	£3,000.00
Training, attendance at 3 meetings	£2,100.00
TOTAL	£23,567.70

Projectors and Controls	
2 Panasonic PT-MZ77OEJ lumens projectors	£12,118.60
Associated hardware and software for integration with Chamber configuration	£8,484.00
Cabling, installation, programming and commissioning	£3,000.00
TOTAL	£23,602.60

Ongoing costs

£1178.00 and £1180.00 per annum for maintenance and support for the Camera/ Speaker System and Projectors/Controls respectively.

6.0   Recommendation.

That Council acquires aforementioned hardware and software for Council.

Appendix 1

201110 Council Chamber audio-visual modernisation v3