Appraisal of webcasting options benefits and issues

Option	*Benefits*	*Issues*	*Comments*
Option 1: Continue as now with webcasting	Easy and quick to implement as it is a continuation of the status quo. Staff are in place and trained. The costs are currently within budgets. It provides transparency and accountability in respect of the Council's decision making for the meetings webcast. It encourages engagement with East Herts' residents, including for people who would not normally come to meetings. EHDC is a relatively rural district and webcasting enables increased accessibility.	Current cost of approximately £13,000 p.a. Current use does not fully utilise the functionality of the existing webcasting system. Relatively low viewings of webcasts, particularly live viewings.	It is likely that to continue webcasting a procurement exercise would be required to contract for a service to be provided in the future.

Option	Benefits	Issues	Comments
Option 2.1: Do more webcasting – more meetings	It provides further transparency and accountability in respect of the Council's decision making for the meetings webcast.

It provides further opportunities for engagement with East Herts' residents, including for people who would not normally come to meetings.

EHDC is a relatively rural district and increased webcasting will enable further increased accessibility to meetings. | This would cost additional money. The amount of extra costs would depend on the number of meetings webcast and the staffing arrangements used to support this.

Staff would need to be recruited to support these extended arrangements. Recent recruitment amongst current staff did not attract many interested staff.

This will not fully utilise the functionality of the existing webcasting system.

It does not directly address the relatively low viewings of webcasts, particularly live viewings. | It is likely that to continue webcasting a procurement exercise would be required to contract for a service to be provided in the future.

Publicity for the increased scope of webcasting could also be used to increase viewings of all meetings. |

Option	Benefits	Issues	Comments
Option 2.2: Do more webcasting – additional functionality	It provides additional mechanism for residents to engage with the Council and for the Council to engage with residents. This will more fully or fully, depending on the amount of additional functionality implemented, utilise the functionality of the existing webcasting system. Information provided by Public-i indicates that authorities that provide additional mechanism for engagement increase webcast viewings relative to those that do not.	This would cost additional money. The amount of extra costs would depend on the number of meetings webcast and the staffing arrangements used to support this. Staff would need to be recruited to support these extended arrangements. Recent recruitment amongst current staff did not attract many interested staff. Provision of engagement through social media will provide more engagement channels with the council we would need to ensure we can respond to those increases in an appropriate manner, especially if these relate to complaints etc. .	EHDC's Communications Team has indicated that they can support some additional functionality within existing resources. However, webcasting can only be part of the "tool kit" to enhance EHDC's engagement with its residents

Option	Benefits	Issues	Comments
Options 3: Do less webcasting	Reduced costs. However, the reduction in cost is marginal due to the charging schedule. Reduces the need to train and recruit staff.	It could be seen as reducing transparency and accountability in respect of the Council's decision making. It provides fewer opportunities for engagement with East Herts' residents, including people who would not normally come to meetings.	Due to the limited functionality of the existing system utilised, it is unlikely that functionality could be reduced. This leads to requiring fewer meetings to be webcast.
Option	Benefits	Issues	Comments

Option	Benefits	Issues	Comments
Option 4: Stop all webcasting	Reduced costs. Eliminates the need to recruit and train staff to operate webcasting. Can be implemented quickly.	It does not support the national "open government" agenda. Although it does not preclude meetings from being recorded in other ways? It reduces the transparency and accountability in respect of the Council's meetings webcast. It removes one mechanism for engagement with East Herts' residents come to meetings, although consideration could be given to reallocating any resource to other engagement processes.	EHDC's Communications Team and the press use webcasts as a reference source.

For all options 1 to 3, inclusive, the following issues would need to be satisfactorily addressed:

- Ownership for the whole of the webcasting needs to be clear.

- Processes need to be effectively implemented to ensure that the system is reliable and resilient.

- Consideration needs to be given to the financial implications of these options.