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Melksham Town Council

Town Hall, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6ES
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Town Clerk and RFO Linda Roberts BA(Hons) PGCAP, FHEA,
FLSCC

To: Councillor P Aves (Town Mayor)
Councillor G Mitcham (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor V Fiorelli
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor K Iles
Councillor H Illman
Councillor C Jeffries
Councillor M Pain
Councillor M Sankey
Councillor T Watts
Councillor T Welch
Councillor A Westbrook
Councillor R Wiltshire

23 April 2021

Dear Councillors

In accordance with the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972, Sch 12, paras 10 (2)(b) you are invited to attend the **Full Council** meeting of the Melksham Town Council. The meeting will be held on **Monday 26th April 2021** commencing at **7.00 pm**.

Under new powers introduced in the Coronavirus 2020 Act (the Local Authorities Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) Flexibility of Local Authorities and Crime Panels Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 the meeting will be held virtually by Zoom.

A period of public participation will take place in accordance with Standing Order 3(F) prior to the formal opening of the meeting. The Press and Public are welcome to attend this meeting using the virtual meeting access instructions on the agenda.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L A Roberts BA(Hons), PGCAP, FHEA, FSLCC
Town Clerk and RFO

**Full Council
Melksham Town Council**

**Monday 26 April 2021
At 7.00 pm via Zoom**

Public Participation – To receive questions from members of the public.

In the exercise of Council functions. Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety, Human Rights and the need to conserve biodiversity. The Council also has a duty to tackle discrimination, provide equality of opportunity for all and foster good relations in the course of developing policies and delivery services under the public sector Equality Duty and Equality 2010.

AGENDA

7. Audio/Visual Technology/Microphones for Meetings (Pages 1 - 10)

To consider the recommendations contained in the report by the Economic Development Manager to enable Melksham Town Council to have a safe system to conduct meetings, if legislation for virtual meetings is not extended. Report to Follow.



MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

26 APRIL 2021

Report: PROGRESS IN PROCURING AUDIO VISUAL TECHNOLOGY FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the Full Council meeting of 22 March 2021, it was agreed there was a need for a wireless microphone AV system with cameras for meetings, due to the flexibility such a system would provide.
- 1.2 It was noted that the cost of such a system would be met from reserves.
- 1.3 The benefits of meeting in person were emphasised, especially for newly elected councillors. However, it was recognised that physical meetings may cause difficulties in accommodating members of the public.
- 1.4 It was unanimously resolved to delegate the purchase of a wireless system with batteries, chargers, cameras and video capture to the Town Clerk for a maximum budget of £28,000 through an appropriate procurement process whilst recognising that the equipment, particularly the microphones, will need to be installed as soon as possible.

2 PROCUREMENT PROGRESS – FIRST STAGE

- 2.1 The Economic Development Manager drew up a brief for a new system and investigated the market for potential suppliers. The brief was distributed to three such companies for a written quotation.
- 2.2 Of the companies approached:
 - 2.2.1 No response was received from the first business;
 - 2.2.2 The second business withdrew because they could not supply and install in our timescale due to escalating work pressures. This is documented in writing;
 - 2.2.3 The third business explored a range of options but got in touch to discuss their indicative costs – their most price competitive option was very significantly in excess of our budget. This is documented in writing. This business did not use the microphone equipment supplier around which our current, obsolete system is based. They could not get a price for the up-to-date incarnation of our current system from any of a number of this manufacturer's authorised distributors.
- 2.3 The above experiences suggest significant demand pressures may exist in this industry currently, which has probably been exacerbated by concerns regarding the direction of current legislation.

3 PROCUREMENT PROGRESS – SECOND STAGE

- 3.1 With the first attempt to procure a system not being successful and the government's initial position on the matter of virtual meetings becoming clearer, local councils were contacted to see what their intentions on the matter were.
- 3.2 It became very clear that Melksham Town Council is in the vanguard of this issue. A number of local councils are watching us closely to see what move we make on this matter.
- 3.3 Discussions with Trowbridge Town Council identified an AV equipment supplier and installer based in Chippenham, who may be able to devise a solution.
- 3.4 Following a site visit and some detailed discussions, three options have been presented by Status AV of Chippenham. These are attached in Appendix B.

4 RESOURCES AND RISK

- 4.1 The greatest risks to this procurement are:
 - 4.1.1 That this is an emerging technology. It is possible that new, lower cost systems will be developed over time, which allow parish councils to comply with legislation, when determined.
 - 4.1.2 Selecting either Option 1 or Option 2 in the attached proposal in Appendix B will mean the system is portable but will entail additional staff time to set up and strip out for each meeting. Also, the development of additional staff technical skills. Whereas Option 3 is more or less 'switch on and go' technology but a permanent installation.
- 4.2 A single staff MTC laptop will be required to drive the Zoom integration.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Appendix A: The AV brief to suppliers
- 5.2 Appendix B: System Options from Status AV [based on a site visit to the Town Hall and Assembly Hall]
- 5.3 Appendix C: Option 3 – image of ceiling mounted microphone
- 5.4 Appendix D: System hire costs for the occasions when we need to move to a third-party location.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 To note this report.
- 6.2 To consider the frequency that holding meetings, where AV is required, in the Assembly Hall [or other alternative location] is likely to be required – and whether such meetings will need to be hybrid in nature and/or live streamed. The final government decision regarding the future position on remote and/or hybrid meetings will be required in order to make a fully informed decision [not yet available, but imminent].
- 6.3 To consider the implications of hybrid meetings and live streaming technology – the more these 2 features are available, the less likely it is that members of the press and public will attend in person. This, in turn, makes it much less likely that an AV system will need to be moved to another, larger location. This is, of course, dependent on the direction of legislation from government – something we are awaiting, and is imminent.
- 6.4 To consider the following compromises in order to bring a system in under budget and more or less to schedule:

- 6.4.1 convenience of permanent vs portable installation
- 6.4.2 staff time and expertise considerations for set up and strip out [Options 1 and 2] vs 'switch on to start' [Option 3]
- 6.4.3 the option of a permanent installation [which most closely meets our brief] combined with equipment hire for occasional alternative locations compared to a portable system with more compromises.
- 6.4.4 Quality vs price – the permanent installation [Option 3] will offer a better AV quality than Options 1 and 2 – but costs more.

7 CONTACT

David McKnight

Economic Development Manager

david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk

07759 284 266



MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

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Report: PROGRESS IN PROCURING AUDIO VISUAL TECHNOLOGY FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

Appendix A: THE BRIEF

BRIEF

8 BACKGROUND

- 8.1 One of the benefits arising from the current pandemic and the various associated lockdowns has been the increased engagement of people with local governance, where councils have streamed their meetings live onto YouTube.
- 8.2 Melksham Town Council has its own YouTube channel for this and other public engagement purposes and have been live streaming key meetings from Zoom onto our YouTube channel whilst we've been holding meetings virtually – this is something we wish to continue when we're able (or obliged) to meet physically in our Town Hall or one of our other buildings.

9 DETAILED REQUIREMENTS

- 9.1 Currently for our physical meetings, when permitted, we share 8 x Bosch CCS 800 Ultra LLB 3330/00 units with inbuilt speakers. This simply provides an amplified audio system for the meeting room. Live streaming audio and video onto YouTube is a planned new departure for this council, once physical meetings resume.
- 9.2 The microphone units in our existing, now obsolete, analogue system will not be sufficient in number for use in physical meetings under current coronavirus regulations. This is because every council member and officer will need their own microphone to avoid the need for time consuming sanitisation between speakers and the need to move shared microphones between people who will be seated at a minimum of 2m apart. We will also need a couple of microphone units for the public.
- 9.3 We know the Digital Acoustic Feedback Suppression functionality on our existing Bosch units works well to counteract acoustic feedback. This, or a similar provision, will continue to be vitally important to us in a physical meeting setting in order to provide good quality, interference-free sound with acoustic feedback suppression.
- 9.4 Moving forward, our technology requirements for physical meetings will change:
 - 9.4.1 We will need a total of 22 microphone units with acoustic feedback suppression-type provision, push to talk buttons, and desk stands.
 - 9.4.2 We will need speakers, either built into the individual microphone units as with our current Bosch system, or separately.
 - 9.4.3 We will need to use low-cost foam windshields on every microphone as a COVID barrier. We will need to change them after every speaker and quarantine them for 3 days after use in a meeting. So, for 22 microphones, we're looking at about 80 cheap foam windshields to allow for a 72-hour non-use quarantine period. We're aware that our staff will also need to sanitise the microphone case and push to talk button between every speaker.
 - 9.4.4 We will need to combine audio with a camera input to capture video. The cameras need to focus on the speakers as they alternate during the meeting, so camera tracking is a required feature. YouTube is a video medium so good quality video is important to us.
 - 9.4.5 We will need to be able to easily set the system to capture and combine video and audio feeds in synch and live stream to YouTube. We will also need to be

able to easily and quickly switch off the live stream at the end of the meeting or if there are confidential items under discussion.

- 9.4.6 Our current meeting room setup is boardroom style with attendees/ members of the public around all 4 sides of a rectangular layout. We recognise we may need to modify this setup in order for the required number of cameras to be economically viable.
- 9.4.7 We need to be able to record and render afterwards an AV feed, separately to the live feed to YouTube. This will form a complete record for minutes purposes. This is necessary because some confidential items will not be YouTube livestreamed but will need to be minuted.
- 9.4.8 We need to have the capability to hold hybrid meetings in the future, in the event they are necessary, permissible or recommended – i.e. some attendees present in the physical meeting room using the AV system outlined, and some coming to the meeting virtually, for example via Zoom. Then the whole lot combined and live streamed to our YouTube channel.
- 9.4.9 If the recommended solution requires a laptop, we are able to use one of our staff laptops for the purpose. We also have a very large, portable monitor screen already available to use, for virtual attendees, if required.
- 9.4.10 The entire system, including cameras, needs to be portable as we will need to move from room to room, or building to building, at least until the COVID restrictions, particularly those in respect of social distancing, are lifted. Also, our rooms are multi-purpose currently, so would need to be cleared between council meetings to allow use for other purposes. For this reason, we favour a wireless solution, so the provision of batteries and chargers need to be considered. We will need protective storage case(s) to protect the equipment in storage and transit. A flight case on castors would be suitable.

10 INTERNAL TECHNICAL AND RESOURCE ISSUES

- 10.1 We're aware that the time taken to set up and strip out equipment and undertake quarantine procedures will be greater than for physical meetings using our current equipment. There will be a need for staff training/familiarisation at the time of supply.
- 10.2 Troubleshooting problems may prove more challenging than previously, so to counteract this issue as well as the increased time taken to set up and strip out, between meetings, the system needs to be as straightforward as possible to setup and manage.

11 QUOTATIONS AND TIMESCALES

I would be obliged if you could supply a written, itemised and costed quotation please for a system which would meet Melksham Town Council's requirements. **You should also consider whether a simple system using existing laptops/tablets and Zoom could be adapted for our purposes.**

Costs quoted should exclude VAT. **A statement should be included to demonstrate how your proposed solution meets our requirements as outlined in this document.**

Please address any queries to the writer, David McKnight, at david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk; 07759 284 266. Please also confirm an intention to quote.

The quotation should encompass supply of equipment, delivery to Melksham Town Council, The Town Hall, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6ES, and first-time installation and set up with a member of our staff who can then become familiar with the process.



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Appendix B: SYSTEM OPTIONS FROM STATUS AV

Melksham Town Hall Audio Visual requirements for Council meetings April 2021

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Live streaming	✓	✓	✓
Hybrid meetings	✓	✓	✓
Video conferencing	✓	✓	✓
Individual microphones	Built in to camera units	4 units evenly spaced to capture room	Ceiling tiles, automatic beam forming
Feedback suppression	✓	✓	✓
Speakers included	Only incoming audio amplified	Only incoming audio amplified	✓
Microphone windshields	N/A	N/A	N/A
Camera tracking	Also you will have a panoramic view	No, 5 preset locations by using remote	Full camera tracking, multiple cameras
Video quality	1080p 30fps	1080p 30fps	1080p 60fps
Room layout	Two full 360 degree cameras 2m apart.	90 degree camera field of view	Any layout as multiple cameras
Separate recording	✓	✓	✓
Laptop required	✓	✓	✓
Portability	10/10	8/10	1/10
Ease of set up/ pack up	8/10	8/10	10/10
Camera/ mic for public	All active participants within 5m of either camera.	Public would need to approach to be seen and heard	✓
Warranty	2 years	2 years	2 years
Training provided	✓	✓	✓
Cost EX VAT	£2500.00	£4250.00	£20,000.00
Lead time	1-2 days	1-2 days	2-3 weeks





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Appendix C: OPTION 3 – IMAGE OF CEILING MOUNTED MICROPHONE





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Appendix D: SYSTEM HIRE COSTS FOR THE OCCASIONS WHEN MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL NEEDS TO MOVE TO A THIRD-PARTY LOCATION

NB: These costs assume the use of Melksham Town Council's large portable screen.

A large contributing factor to the cost of this hired set up is the multiple cameras as this requires a dedicated operator. If the Council would be happy on these few occasions to have a single static camera, the quote could be reduced quite a bit further.

Click on the link below for the quote:

https://statusav.current-rms.com/view_document/ce06d570-8670-0139-68fe-0a907833e252.