

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b>	Thursday, 2 November 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Audio Visual system replacement		
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Neil Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy		
<b>Report Author:</b>	Adrian Webb, Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services awebb@uttlesford.gov.uk Tel: 01799 510421	<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes

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## Summary

1. The current audio visual systems in place at Saffron Walden need upgrading. The microphones are at end of life and the camera was a Covid installation to enable people to see the meetings when public attendance was restricted. In addition, the conference facility needs to be fitted out with audio visual equipment, so as to enable council meetings to be held there, along with the potential to hire the facility to external users.
2. A capital budget is available, but following a procurement exercise the sum needs to be increased. In addition, a new revenue budget needs to be identified for the ongoing licensing, maintenance and support costs.

## Recommendations

3. It is recommended that
  - a. The capital budget is increased by £50,000; and
  - b. A new revenue budget is established at a full year cost of £56,088

## Financial Implications

4. The additional capital funding to be financed from the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Reserve, as will any revenue cost in the remainder of 2023/24, as this project will support the wider transformation objectives of Blueprint Uttlesford.

## Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	A specification was prepared following discussion with industry specialists, Democratic Services staff and using general feedback from councillors.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The system is set up to enable hybrid meetings to take place. In addition, it will be possible, legislation permitting, for a single meeting to be held across two sites (London Road and Little Canfield), thereby cutting travel requirements for attendees.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	A new system will be more effective and efficient for Democratic Services.

## Situation

### London Road

6. The existing system has been developed piecemeal over the last 11 years. The current microphones were purchased in 2012 and are no longer supported, in terms of security and operating upgrades. More modern microphones are much more capable of avoiding interference from the numerous competing devices, such as mobile phones.
7. In, or about, 2015 the council introduced audio broadcasting, linked to the ModGov committee system. This was replaced around 2020 as the council moved to a camera based YouTube channel. The camera though is a single wide angle version, which met the needs of the council during Covid but is not a suitable ongoing solution.
8. Presentations, mainly at Planning Committee, are currently done using a projector and screen, which is outdated given the now wide use of platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

### Little Canfield

9. The council has developed a brand new, three room conference facility, with the aim of holding council meetings as well as hiring out the facility to external users. To enable this to happen an audio visual installation is required.

### **The Process**

10. Following discussion with industry experts, the council produced a specification for the new audio visual solution, with a five year support requirement, which was then put to the market through a Procurement Framework. Ten companies expressed an interest and after verifying their capability to meet the requirements, were sent the tender pack.
11. The chosen supplier, who was the best fit for quality of offering and price, is [Civico](#) who have done similar recent installs for Camden Council and Oadby and Wigston Council, as well as supporting for some time Westminster and Croydon councils.
12. The key elements of the new system include
  - a. New microphones at each site, with voting capability
  - b. A mix of fixed and mobile 86" screens
  - c. Multiple cameras in each room to enable enhanced visual experience for the viewing public
  - d. New speakers at London Road
  - e. Microsoft Teams usage for Planning Committee meetings, to enable councillors to view the presentations on their laptops.
  - f. As legislation allows, the ability to hold a single meeting across the two sites (London Road and Little Canfield) thereby reducing travel.
  - g. Realtime support and monitoring for the following meetings, to fix problems before they impact the meeting;
    - i. Full council
    - ii. Cabinet
    - iii. Planning Committee
    - iv. Other meetings as the 100 hour contract per annum permits

### **Pricing**

13. The original capital budget identified was £165,000 with only a small revenue budget, previously used for maintenance of the system.
14. The capital cost for the successful tenderer is approximately £50,000 greater than this sum. In addition, software licensing means there is a requirement for

an annual revenue budget of £56,088, which will be built into future years budgets.

15. A number of the companies who expressed an interest in the tender opportunity but did not submit a final bid were asked why they hadn't, and the answer was in the main cost, with an indication that they were looking for a budget circa twice the size of that available to the council.

### **Timescale**

16. The installation will likely be in two phases with Little Canfield fitted out first. That will enable the work at London Road to be undertaken, with any scheduled meetings being redirected to Little Canfield. The new system should be in place by the end of February 2024.

### **Blueprint Uttlesford**

17. The council's transformation programme does not only look at reducing the costs of services but also looks to enhance the quality of service that is offered to the public.

## **Risk Analysis**

18.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Hardware supply delays the project	2 – computer chips remain in short supply and lead times are longer than would be ideal	2 – the existing system would need to remain in place	The order will be placed as soon as practicable following Cabinet approval

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.