

MULTIMEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the meeting of the Media Platforms Short Life Working Group on 22 October 2012, the Communications team was asked to provide initial views on how Argyll and Bute Council might use multimedia.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The group is asked to note the report.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The Media Platforms Short Life Working Group is currently considering a variety of multimedia options:

- Looking Local
- Proposals on council television channels, including schools
- Webcasts

Views on each of these are outlined below.

3.2 Looking Local

Work on Argyll and Bute Council's Looking Local service is well underway with the launch scheduled for Monday 12 November 2012. A detailed communications plan for this has been prepared by the Customer Management Project team. The Communications team can assist with the implementation of this and officers have already assisted with creation of flyers and posters ahead of the Looking Local launch.

3.3 Proposals on council television channels, including schools

The SLWG has received proposals on how external providers may be able to deliver council television channels. The communications team has a number of questions about this, namely around editorial control and how suitable content would be sourced and delivered. If such a service is delivered by a provider

which is already involved with the council in its local media role, there is potential for conflict of interest in terms of news coverage. There is also a risk that significant expenditure on communication/PR could, in itself, result in adverse publicity for the council. The involvement of journalists or employees who are not directly employed by the council would need to be carefully considered, especially in light of the work already carried out by the communications team and in terms of consistency of the council's communications approach.

The idea of a council television channel is, though, an exciting one and it would be interesting to examine in more detail if and how we could deliver this in-house. There is lots of potential especially from school television channels and some of our schools have already created their own resources with great success (for example, DGSTV).

Whether a council television channel was delivered by an external supplier or created in-house, the communications team feels it would be essential to have a clear procedure and guidelines in place regarding editorial content and control, to ensure a good fit with the team's action plan and the council's agreed communications strategy, and to maintain consistency in the messages and information we are sending out.

3.4 Webcasts

There is potential for the council to make much more use of webcam and webcast technology.

Straightforward, essentially unedited webcam broadcasts of council meetings made available on the council's website using YouTube or similar would be cost-effective, open and transparent. There would be cost implications in terms of suitable equipment and it would be important to be able to provide a quality broadcast.

Another possibility is more active and creative use of YouTube/similar technology to provide video features or interviews for upload to the council's website – for example, interviews with lead councillors following major meetings and decisions; budget/other updates; positive video features about council services and projects. The communications/web team already have a small video camera which (along with some basic operation training that could be sourced locally) could reasonably achieve this. This approach would be cost-effective and a good introduction to use of multimedia, as well as being relatively low-risk in terms of cost, publicity or impact on existing workloads.

YouTube is very cheap and the council's use of this has been limited. It might be a reasonable practical approach to start off at this level before incurring significant expenditure. Customer surveys carried out in autumn 2011 indicated that 89 per cent of customers preferred to find out news and information about the

council through local newspapers. While it is important to make the best use of rapidly changing modern technology and social media, it is equally vital to recognise how our customers prefer to hear from and about us, and consider any significant investment accordingly.

Video-conferencing is to be explored in more depth, including examining the UHI model, and it is suggested that we investigate multimedia in the same way.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Looking Local is under way and is the subject of a separate, detailed report.
- 4.2 Using multimedia has potential but it would be helpful to investigate further how we might start to make more use of this in-house before significantly involving external suppliers.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy - none
- 5.2 Financial - none
- 5.3 Legal - none
- 5.4 HR - none
- 5.5 Equalities - none
- 5.6 Risk - none
- 5.7 Customer Service - none

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