



BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

RECORDING OF MEETINGS REPORT

Version 3.0 Updated and amended 31/08/2023.

Background: Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council has requested an investigation into the recording of council meetings (to be uploaded to the internet at a later stage) to facilitate open government. There have been some issues with regard to implementing this in terms of expertise and equipment in the past, and this report is raised in an effort to explore the council's options in managing this service.

The nature of council meetings involves up to 18 members who need to be seen and heard adequately. The council meets regularly in the same room but a permanent set up is not possible as the room is not controlled by the Town Council, and they are not the sole users. Any equipment used needs to be set up and taken down quickly.

Options: At the last meeting of Full Council, it was agreed to investigate two ways of managing the recording of meetings:

1. The service is outsourced to a contractor, who will handle this for a cost. As meetings are evening events the cost could be substantial though recent quote came out at £1000 per year using equipment we supply, however a provider will have the necessary expertise to ensure that it is relatively problem free. This could be commercial organisations like Inclusive Digital, Bexhill Radio or voluntary groups like the Town Forum - who performed this service previously.
2. The service is run in-house. This would necessitate the council purchasing equipment and recruiting staff to deliver the service. Staffing would need to be fully employed staff (rather than councillors) to negate any accusations of bias. Currently Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council employs five members of staff and has a small amount of equipment (*See appendix 1*). These staff all have other priorities and workloads that do not encompass working at meetings. Whether the level of expertise and manpower is sufficient is yet to be determined but unlikely at this stage to be so. Staff are not contracted to work evenings therefore this would require a contract re-negotiation and at present staff are not willing to work additional hours late into the evening.

Equipment: The process of live streaming has a requirement in equipment and manpower. This differs from previous versions of the report in that the main focus is now an audio only service that will be pre-recorded and uploaded at a later date to the server.

With that aim the following equipment is required.

1x computer to record the content and download to the streaming service/server.

1x External sound card such as a Creative Soundblaster.

1x Audio mixer with a minimum of 12 inputs and 2 outputs.

12x microphones (Condenser mics-hypercardiod.)

12x Table stands for the above.

12x XLR cables

Staffing: The set up and operation for each meeting will require 2 staff: 1 to monitor the sound and 1 to handle the recording. Both will set up and take down the equipment. As some of these issues are of a technical nature, training and competence are a factor.



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The Venue: The requirements for the venue include sufficient power to run the equipment. This is assumed to be fulfilled in the Council chamber where meetings are currently held.

Technical Factors: The following miscellaneous factors are important for recording:

- Equipment set-up
- Microphone sound check
- Recording check

Suggested microphone set-up: To ensure everyone is able to be heard equally, hypercardioid microphones have been suggested. In an ideal set-up, each speaker will have his own microphone but as few council meetings are fully attended by all 18 councillors 12 is the recommended number with a mic covering 2 speakers when attendance is greater than 12 councillors. These will be individually mixed and balanced at the audio mixer.

Please note, this set up is not designed for amplification of the participants in the room, but only for the purposes of recording. If this is required, speakers and amplifiers will also need to be purchased.

Costs:

The cost of the required equipment are as follows:

No.	Item	Cost (£) Each	Supplier	Total Cost (£)
1	Macbook Air (Apple, 2020 model)	850	Curry's	850
1	Creative Soundblaster X4	200	Amazon	200
1	Behringer Xenyk 18-way (analogue) mixing desk	300	Thomann	300
12	Behringer C2 condenser mic	50	Gear4Music	600
12	Table stands	7	CPC	84
12	XLR mic cables 3m long	7	Gear4Music	84
6	Asstd cables (USB, 1/4 inch jack etc)	7	CPC	42
2	Staffing costs	115	BoSTC	230*
			Final total	2160

*Please see breakdown of this in appendix 2

Risk Factors: There are certain risks involved in live streaming which are identified below:

- Reputational damage. Inappropriate behaviour or language will have a negative impact on Bexhill-on-Sea town Council.
- GDPR. Care needs to be taken to ensure this legislation isn't breached. This may be difficult, especially if members of the public are present.
- Confidentiality. Certain subjects may need to be discussed confidentially. These will need to be redacted from any recordings.
- Financial. This service is invariably expensive and may not represent best value.
- Accessibility. It is assumed that this service increases accessibility for the public, however, to avoid accusations of bias, the recording will probably have to be streamed or shown unedited. This is unlikely to be heard as either dynamic or interesting listening by the general public.



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- Technical or personnel. There may be failings in technology, equipment or services that prevent streaming or personnel may fail to turn up.
- Editing. This will be necessary due to some of the reasons noted above. How this is handled without giving rise to accusations of bias is a potentially tricky issue.

Further Actions:

- The policy on recording of meetings needs to be reviewed as soon as practicable. This should include an editorial policy.
- A method of gauging interest in streaming of the recordings should be conducted – The council may end up spending a considerable sum of money for a service 3 people use.
- Equipment needs to be purchased, training arranged, or a contractor appointed.
- A test event conducted.
- Go live!

Recommendation:

The Town Council has been approached by former contractor, Bexhill Radio. As the council is now considering recording and uploading, not offering a live service as before, Bexhill Radio is prepared to offer a community service at low cost to facilitate recording. This is dependent on the council purchasing the quality equipment as described above. This will mean that the council will not need to recruit new staff to operate the equipment and will not require the associated training and ongoing management resources. As the council is insisting that the recording of meetings is a priority, the council is recommended to purchase the required equipment and negotiate a one-year contract with Bexhill Radio to test the service. The Council is asked to consider whether this be just Full Council or all committees.

Appendix I: Council owned equipment

3 x Shure hand-held microphones 1 x adaptor and 1 x control box plus 2 microphone holders

1x Shure Shotgun microphone

1x Benq digital projector

1xWebcaster

1x Logitech Webcam

1x Logitech Webcam - Small

1x USB 3.0 7-port hub - TP-Link with USB cable

1x Keyboard

1x 22" Monitor

Assorted 13a, USB and HDMI leads

Cable protector

Webcam remote

Kitchen timer

Patch cable

Apple mouse

Two wooden blocks

Camera stand

2 speakers



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Appendix 2 Staff cost breakdown.

The set up and operation of this for each meeting will require 2 staff: 1 to monitor the sound and 1 to handle the recording.

The time breakdown will be as follows assuming a 6pm meeting.

4:30-5:30	Set up equipment, check sound and internet accessibility and sort any problems.
5:30-6:00	Pre-meeting period
6:00-8:30	Meeting
8:30-9:15	Pack up equipment and exit

Total hours worked per person: **4hours 45mins.**

Total Man Hours: **9hours 30mins**

Estimated cost to use in-house staff = approx. £300 inc salary, NI and Pension contributions. This does not include time spent editing or uploading the meeting or any overtime payments.

Appendix 3 Hypercardioid microphones

This is also called a rifle mic. It has a pickup cone that is shaped like a heart but longer and thinner than a cardioid, so it doesn't have to sit so close to the speaker.