

By: Tanya Oliver – Director of Strategic Development and Public Access

To: Roger Gough - Cabinet Member for Corporate Support Services and Performance Management

Subject: Kent Digital Service

Summary: This report explores the opportunities post-Kent TV for Kent County Council to engage digitally with Kent's Citizens

1. Introduction

Following the decision not to continue with Kent TV, it is necessary to look forward and find new ways of engaging the public through digital media. Increasingly more authorities are looking towards online video content to interact with their citizens and with new technology, more and more is possible in this field.

The County Council budget set on 18 February 2010 retained an element within the Strategic Development Unit to run a "Kent Digital service".

This paper has been drawn up in a short period of time and therefore costs and proposals are indicative. Further work will need to be done to ensure a more robust business case but this will at least give a holding solution for 2010/11 whilst we take a more measured look at the future of digital provision.

The content produced during the two year pilot of Kent TV remains the property of KCC and will be used within the kent.gov website to enhance our digital offering to the public. There is also scope to continue to encourage tourism into the county through the retention of a 'What's On' function and the creation of content with highlights the best the County has to offer.

2. Digital Engagement

The following proposal has been drawn up in consultation with the Head of ICT Commissioning, Corporate Web Manager, Head of Communications, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support and Performance Management and the Leader of the Council.

It is proposed that:

- 2.1. Kent County Council enables video streaming on kent.gov to broadcast programmes which are of value to Kent citizens and also to attract international visitors.
- 2.2. The video channel will be incorporated into Kent.gov and would not be a community channel like Kent TV but would have a stronger focus on KCC initiatives.
- 2.3. We would draw upon the wealth of content that is already in existence and ensure this continues to be embedded in the kent.gov and other websites, including You Tube.
- 2.4. Video content will focus initially on "How To" and tourism, building on the work already done in these areas.

- 2.5. A focus on young people will be a key part of any digital service KCC has and as far as possible is will be driven by young people - covering their priorities and their issues and providing an outlet for work and content they already do either through schools, universities, youth groups, etc. We will of course work closely with the Youth Service, Children, Families and Education department, KDAAT and further and higher education partners in any discussions on this.
- 2.6. The 'What's On' function will be retained and will still enable local residents, groups and businesses to upload their own events onto the site.
- 2.7. The webcast function will continue in some form and will focus more heavily on engaging Kent residents in the democratic process.
- 2.8. Establishing a digital service will require additional staff capacity and expertise and the KCC can benefit from some of the existing expertise in the former Kent TV team.
- 2.9. Relevant content could also be embedded throughout kent.gov and other platforms such as You Tube ensuring the reach of the content is extended.

3. Budget

The budget within the MTFP for 2010/11 is £100k for a "Kent Digital service", £100k for 'What's On' and £50k for webcasting. This gives a **net budget of £250k**. In addition, the MTFP allows for £100k income generation. If the income is achievable, the total potential **gross budget** is £350k.

Costs are indicative at this stage but this budget should deliver the above proposal, including an enhanced webcasting facility and the minimum IT support and adjustments that need to be made.

This proposal will not deliver the same functionality and service as the existing Kent TV service. The main differences will be as follows:

- Significantly reduced volume of content:
 - No dedicated budget within the £250k net spend to commission content from Kent production companies (this does not preclude KCC units commissioning content directly from production companies as they currently do)
 - A reduced capacity to directly produce content on such a wide range of topics and areas
- A variety of reduced functionality, for example:
 - There will not be a video player as currently visible on the home page of Kent TV
 - There will no longer be a live schedule of programming being streamed
 - A more complicated search-engine optimisation process online
 - There would not be an ability for Kent residents to upload their own content (outside the static events system)

- There will not be a voting function
- There will not be a carousel ability
- There will not be the capacity (unless it is commissioned from elsewhere) to deliver initiatives such as Hollywould or Battle of the Bands.

4. Funding

It is proposed that in the longer-term, the video site and the staff could be funded from a number of sources, which could include money from KCC's overall communications budget, enabling a reduction in print communications and funding from external organisations such as Visit Kent to create tourism focused content. In the future it may also be possible to obtain match funding from various sources such as Interreg funding.

5. Conclusion

The pilot of Kent TV has supplied a wealth of content which has been transferred to Kent County Council. The proposal above ensures that this is not lost and the benefits are still available to the people of Kent. It will no longer be a community channel in the same way as Kent TV as there will be a reduction in content and functionality, but it will continue to offer a quality service in a different way.

6. Author Contact Details

Tanya Oliver – Director of Strategic Development and Public Access

✉Tanya.oliver@kent.gov.uk ☎ 01622 694817