

Report of the Head of Communications

Protocol for Webcasting, Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

Summary

1. Group Leaders have agreed in principle to extend the current webcasting trial and provide residents with the opportunity of viewing Full Council and Cabinet Meetings. At the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 26th September, Members made a number of recommendations to the draft protocol and this document reflects the clarifications that were sought.
2. This paper includes a draft protocol for Members' approval.

Background

3. Both Local Authorities and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have been exploring ways in which residents can be encouraged to participate in local democracy through the provision of filming and recording of council meetings. CYC has filmed Cabinet meetings over the last six months and made them available on its YouTube site. It has also 'streamed' Cabinet meetings live over the intranet. The main purpose of webcasting has been to give members of the public the chance to view meetings as they happen without having to attend in person.
4. Webcasting and the retention of film on the Council's YouTube site does not replace the formal record of the meeting and the decisions made. The only formal record of any meeting of a Local Authority is its minutes and agendas which are required to be maintained and retained for a number of years.

Protocol

Operating Procedure for Filming/Webcasts

5. At the start of each meeting to be filmed, an announcement will be made to the effect that the meeting is being webcast, and that the Chair may also terminate or suspend the webcasting of the meeting, in accordance with this protocol. This will be confirmed by the Chair making the following statement:- “I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet and will be capable of repeated viewing.”
6. Webcasts will only commence at the beginning of a meeting when the Chair opens the meeting and will finish when the meeting is closed.
7. The Chair has the discretion to terminate or suspend the webcast if in their opinion continuing to web cast would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting. Circumstances that could lead to suspension or termination of web casting include public disturbance or other suspension of the meeting or the potential infringement of the rights of any individual.
8. No exempt or confidential agenda items shall be webcast, and no part of any meeting will be webcast after the Council has voted to exclude the press and public because there is likely to be disclosure of exempt or confidential information.
9. Anything that is outside of the scope of the meeting will not be filmed. This includes reaction shots, walkouts etc. Where an operator is unsure on what to film or is in an unfamiliar situation, the operator should always select a camera shot of the Chair of the meeting.
10. Young people under the age of 16 will not be filmed.
11. Editing of content should only be undertaken if there is a legal reason, for instance the name of a person in witness protection was divulged by a public speaker, confidential personal information is inadvertently disclosed or defamatory comments made. Editing of content may also be authorised in exceptional circumstance such as if an attendee is taken ill on screen. A log will be maintained of webcasts where content has been edited.

12. Should the webcast be halted for a technical reason the following procedure will be applied:
 - The operator will inform the Committee Officer as soon as practically possible
 - The operator will also inform the Press Office and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services so they can disseminate this information to political group leaders including an explanation of what went wrong, what is being done to recover any lost data and how we will mitigate issues in the future.
13. When any editing of content occurs then the same procedure as above will be followed.
14. In the event of obscenities being shouted, the sound will be muted either live or in post production as our webcasts are accessible by people of different ages
15. As part of the process for registering to speak at Cabinet or Council meetings, residents will be advised that the meeting will be streamed on the internet and a copy of the meeting retained on YouTube. If an attendee does not wish to be filmed whilst speaking to the committee, the webcast operator will:
 - Give guidance to the best place to sit
 - Ensure no close-up images of the attendee will be taken
 - If the attendee is speaking, the webcast operator will focus the camera on the ChairGuidance notes will also be issued to those residents in the audience at council meetings advising them to contact any member of CYC staff if they have concerns about being seen on camera.

Technical Proposals

16. A digital back-up of recordings will be kept by the Marketing Team and will be an unedited raw version of what the cameras and microphones 'see' during the meeting. This will be kept by the Marketing team and used in the case of:
 - Internal scrutiny of pause decisions
 - Back-up facility in case of technical issues

Signage at Meetings

17. On signs to be displayed inside and outside the meeting room and on the meeting agenda there will be the following notice:-

WEBCASTING NOTICE

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the internet - at the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

Public seating areas will not be filmed by the council.

Filming by members of the public and press

18. Initially, the Council proposes to film all Cabinet and Council meetings but will consider either filming or securing a sound recording of other public meetings over time. Residents are permitted to film or record councillors and officers at any council meetings that are open to the public and press with immediate effect.
19. We may reasonably ask for the filming to be undertaken in such a way that it is not disruptive or distracting to the good order and conduct of the meeting. As a courtesy, attendees will be informed at the start of the meeting that it is being filmed; we recommend that those wanting to film liaise with council staff before the start of the meeting.

Tweeting or blogging by members of the public and press

20. The Council permits social media reporting of all its public meetings.

Photography

21. The Council permits photography at all of its public meetings.

Financial Implications

22. Webcasting will incur a financial cost and opportunities to fund the service will be identified.

Recommendations

23. Audit & Governance Committee agree the webcasting protocol.

Reason: It strikes a balance between allowing webcasting of meetings with the needs of those who either do not wish to be filmed or are young people.

Contact Details

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Report Approved ✓

Date 29 October 2013

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Legal

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Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all* **All** ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report