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**Customer & Corporate Services  
Scrutiny Management Committee**

**9 March 2020**

Report of Director of Governance

**E-democracy Update Report**

**Summary**

1. This report outlines the current position regarding the use of video conferencing facilities in local authorities and City of York Council (CYC) webcasting performance over the period from February 2019 to January 2020.

**Recommendation**

2. To note the updates on video conferencing and webcasting performance, and consider how the Council engages and promotes it's You tube channel to the public with particular regard to scrutiny meetings.

**Background**

3. At the meeting of this Committee in September 2019:

*'Members discussed Councillor digital engagement for current and prospective Members and the potential use of IT and video conferencing solutions to allow them to actively participate in public meetings when it was not possible to attend. Officers confirmed that the technology was available but that more engagement with all Councillors was required to identify their requirements and how the different interaction options would be managed in a meeting.'*

4. It was resolved that:

- *That an E-Democracy update report be received in six months' time.*
- *That options to progress Councillor digital engagement be delegated to Officers for consideration, in conjunction with*

*the Chair and that any further information be reported back to the Committee in due course and potentially as part of the above 6 monthly update.*

## **Video conferencing**

5. Since the last report it has been clarified that Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the rules for the holding of council meetings and makes clear that that all those taking part in a council meeting must be physically “present” where the meeting is taking place. The government has confirmed that it considers these rules “still remain appropriate for council meetings”. (*LGIU article ‘Buffering for 12 years: Why councillors still can’t attend meetings remotely’ published 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019*).
6. It is likely that it will become allowable for Joint Committees and Combined Authorities to use video conferencing at meetings but this requires amendment of the Act, and consultation is planned for this purpose. The original MHCLG consultation response on *Connecting Town Halls: consultation on allowing joint committees and combined authorities to hold meetings by video conference*’ is contained at Annex A to this report for information.

## **Webcasting**

7. The table in Annex B summarises the top performing CYC webcasts over the 12 month period February 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Total views for the last 12 months were 63,949, an increase of 14,101 views (+28%) when compared to the same period the previous year. The figures include ‘live’ views and later ‘on demand’ views.
8. As an extract the top ‘performing committee meetings were as follows:

| <b>Meeting</b>                       | <b>Date</b> | <b>Views</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Audit & Governance                   | 18/9/19     | 2849         |
| Executive                            | 29/8/19     | 1306         |
| Exec Member –Transport<br>& Planning | 7/2/19      | 1195         |
| Gambling/Licensing Reg               | 18/3/19     | 941          |
| Planning                             | 17/10/19    | 937          |
| Area Planning sub-committee          | 5/9/19      | 805          |

For comparison purposes Budget Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (as at 10am 27<sup>th</sup> February) had 424 views.

9. Recent webcasting figures for a sample of recent scrutiny and policy committees are as follows (as at 28/2/20):

| <b>Meeting</b>              | <b>Date</b> | <b>Views</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| This Committee              | 18/2/2020   | 118          |
| This committee (Calling in) | 3/2/2020    | 100          |
| Economy & Place             | 12/2/2020   | 362          |
| Childrens/Educ/Communities  | 26/2/2020   | 63           |
| Housing & Community Safety  | 24/2/2020   | 66           |
| Health & Adult Social Care  | 18/2/2020   | 100          |

10. Members of this committee are asked to consider this information in the context of e-democracy, and whether and how public engagement via webcasting can be further encouraged and promoted particularly with regard to scrutiny meetings.

## **Council Plan**

11. Consideration of the matters contained in this report will contribute to the outcomes relating to 'An Open and Effective Council' and underpin the work to deliver the other seven core outcomes.

## **Specialist Implications:**

12.

- **Financial:** no financial implications
- **Human Resources (HR):** - no HR implications
- **Equalities:** matters relating to democracy are applied equally to all residents.
- **Legal:** no legal implications

## Contact Details

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### Chief Officers Responsible for the report:

Janie Berry  
Director of Governance

Report  
Approved



Date 28/02/2020

### Specialist Implications Officer(s)

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

**All**

YES

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Background Documents

Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny Management  
Committee 9th September 2019 – Edemocracy papers and  
minutes can be found here:

[https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144  
&MId=11305&Ver=4](https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MId=11305&Ver=4)

## Annexes

**Annex A** Connecting Town Halls: consultation on allowing joint committees and combined authorities to hold meetings by video conference (MHCLG July 2019)

**Annex B** City of York Council Highest Viewed Webcasts 1<sup>ST</sup> February 2019 to 31<sup>ST</sup> January 2020

## **Abbreviations:**

**LGIU** Local Government Information Unit

**CYC** City of York Council

**MHCLG** Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government