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| Subject: | Protocol for Web Casting Meetings | | |
| Date: | 23 September 2008 | | |
| Report of: | Head of Democratic Services | | |
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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with a protocol for the web casting of meetings for approval and to inform Members of the commencement of the web casting of meetings as a pilot project from the 9th October 2008.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the protocol detailed in the report be adopted and that Members be guided by it during the web casting of meetings

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Council's Governance Committee agreed on 1 July 2008 that, as a pilot, certain meetings should be the subject of live web transmission ('web casting'), or recorded for subsequent transmission. Fixed cameras have been installed in the council chambers of both Town Halls for this purpose.
- 3.2 Although the advantages of web casting were known, it is important that the web casting is done properly and that Members and the public are fully aware of what is involved. Most local authorities deal with this by developing a protocol which tends to follow a similar format.
- 3.3 The pilot project will commence on the 9th October and end in June 2009. The following meetings will be included in the pilot project:-
- Full Council;
 - Cabinet;
 - Planning Committee;
 - Overview & Scrutiny meetings;
 - and other meetings as will be agreed by the Governance Committee.

- 3.4 The web casting of such meetings will comply with the protocol outlined in paragraph 4. Any proposals to add further meetings to the pilot would be brought to the Governance Committee for approval.
- 3.4 The draft protocol outlined in paragraph 4, which is based on a draft published by Public-I, has been produced to assist the conduct of web cast meetings and to ensure that in doing so the Council is compliant with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998. It is intended that the following will apply to all meetings to be web cast by the Council.

4. Draft Protocol

Agenda Front Sheets and Signage at Meetings

- 4.1 Advanced notice of the intention to web cast a meeting will be given on each agenda with the inclusion of the following:

“WEB CASTING NOTICE

This meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council’s web site. At the start of the meeting the Chairman 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 1988. Data collected during this web cast will be retained in accordance with the Council’s published policy (*Guidance for Employees’ on the BHCC website*).

Therefore by entering the meeting room and using the seats around the meeting tables, you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for the purpose of web casting and/or Member training. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the public gallery area.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Head of Democratic Services or the designated Democratic Services Officer listed on the agenda.”

- 4.2 In addition signs will be displayed inside and outside the meeting room (see appendix 2).

Conduct of meetings

- 4.3 At the start of each meeting to be filmed, an announcement will be made to the effect that the meeting is being web cast, and that the Chairman may also terminate or suspend the web casting of the meeting, in accordance with this protocol. This will be confirmed by the Chairman 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.”

Termination or suspension of web cast

- 4.4 The Chairman of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend the web cast if, in his/her opinion, continuing to web cast would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting.

This would include:

- (i) Public disturbance or other suspension of the meeting;
- (ii) Exclusion of public and press being moved and supported;
- (iii) Any other reason moved and seconded and supported by the Committee.

- 4.5 No exempt or confidential agenda items shall be web cast.

Access to Web Casts

- 4.6 Subject to paragraph 4.7 below all archived web casts will be available to view on the Council’s website for a period of six months. Meetings are recorded onto DVD, which will be stored in accordance with records management procedures.

- 4.7 Archived web casts or parts of web casts shall only be removed from the Council’s website if the Monitoring Officer considers that it is necessary because all or part of the content of the web cast is or is likely to be in breach of any statutory provision or common law doctrine, for example Data Protection and Human Rights legislation or provisions relating to confidential or exempt information.

- 4.8 If the Monitoring Officer has decided to take such action he must notify all elected Members in writing as soon as possible of his decision and the reasons for it.

- 4.9 The Council expects the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer to ensure that all meetings are conducted lawfully. Therefore, the Council anticipates that the need to exercise the power set out above will occur only exceptionally.

- 4.10 Any elected Member who is concerned about any web cast should raise their concerns with the Head of Democratic Services or the Monitoring Officer.

Review & Monitoring

- 4.11 Operation of the web casting will be monitored and reviewed from time to time and reported to the Governance Committee.

Guidance for Members

- 4.12 A supplementary guidance paper in relation to web casting aimed at Members is attached at appendix 1 for your information.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Leaders of the Groups have been consulted on the proposal to web cast meetings and a Members briefing on how web casting works was held with Public-I on the 9th September.

- 5.2 It is intended to provide specific training for Members on web casting as part of the Member Development Programme. In addition, following advice from Public-i each of the meetings in the pilot project (other than Full Council) can be filmed before the pilot commences and played back to those Members so that they can experience the process and see how it would appear as a web cast.

6. Financial & Other Implications

Financial Implications:

- 6.1 The pilot web casting project is provided by a local company (Public-i Group) at a cost of £28,680, and met on a one-off basis within existing budgets. On review of the pilot project, costs of full implementation will need to be assessed and funding identified. This may result in a pressure during 2009/10 and in future years and place other projects at risk.

Finance Officer consulted: Peter Francis 29-2542 Date: 10 September 2008

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 The legal implications have been referred to in the body of the report.

Lawyer consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis 29-1500 Date: 6 August 2008

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 The web casting of meetings will provide greater accessibility to the public to council meetings and the decision-making process. Web casting will contribute to removing barriers to citizen participation thereby increasing diversity footprint of the Authority.

Sustainability Implications:

- 6.4 There are no sustainability implications in the provision of web casting of meetings.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 6.5 There are no Crime and Disorder implications.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 6.6 The success of the pilot project will determine whether the council continues to web cast meetings and will lead to consideration of which meetings should be web cast. This will have an impact on the use of resources and value for money that can be achieved balanced against increased participation and involvement in the democratic process.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Guidance for Members

Appendix 2 – Draft Public Notice regarding the web casting of meetings

Background papers:

Draft Guidance on web casting from Public-i

Other sources and references:

