

**EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON THE 20 SEPTEMBER 2011****GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE****4.00PM 20 SEPTEMBER 2011****COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL****MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Littman (Chair), A Norman (Deputy Chair), J Kitcat, Morgan, Powell, G Theobald, Hamilton, Mears, Summers and Sykes.

**30. USE OF MOBILE PHONES, AUDIO RECORDING AND FILMING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- 30.1 The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer concerning the use of mobile phones, audio recording and filming at council meetings.
- 30.2 The Monitoring Officer noted some minor typographical errors in the report, including a deletion in Recommendation 2.1(ii). He explained that it was necessary to find a compromise that took into account developments in technology without disrupting proceedings of council meetings; it was proposed that existing rules relating to filming be retained and that the rules relating to audio recording and mobile be amended to permit discreet use of mobile devices. He advised that the Chair would retain the discretion to order all devices to be switched off.
- 30.3 Councillor Morgan welcomed the proposal and noted that other local authorities and the Houses of Parliament were following the same approach. He accepted that mobile phones could be distracting, but that Members were able to multi-task; access to the internet would enhance proceedings and increase active participation from residents.
- 30.4 Councillor Summers noted that the Chair of a meeting would have absolute discretion to order all mobile devices to be switched off and raised concerns that this could be abused.
- 30.5 The Monitoring Officer advised that, should Member feel it necessary, Procedure Rule 31.2(iii) could be qualified so that the Chair can only order that all devices be switched off if they consider their use not to be conducive to proceedings.
- 30.6 Councillor J Kitcat stated that the proposals were necessary in order to support new ways of working and increase access to decision-making, as well

as enhancing debate by enabling Members to access information during meetings.

- 30.7 Councillor Mears highlighted the importance of the Mayor's power to use his or her discretion to make rulings when presiding over meeting of the full Council.
- 30.8 Councillor Summers moved an amendment to the recommendations, which sought to qualify Procedure Rule 31.2(iii) as per the Monitoring Officer's advice.
- 30.9 Councillor J Kitcat formally seconded the amendment.
- 30.10 Councillor G Theobald noted the benefits of the proposed changes, but reported that some Members were concerned about the distribution of extracts from web casts and advised that the changes should be kept under review in order to deal with any ongoing concerns.
- 30.11 Councillor A Norman raised concerns about the Green amendment and stressed the importance of the Chair's authority to preside over a meeting and the need to prevent a prolonged debate over such issues.
- 30.12 The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Chair's absolute discretion could not be diluted by the amendment because it was prescribed in the Council Procedure Rules.
- 30.13 The Chair put the Green amendment to the vote, which was passed.
- 30.14 **RESOLVED** – That the Governance Committee agrees and recommends to Council:
- (1) That the existing rules relating to mobile phones and audio recording of council proceedings be amended as described in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report; and
  - (2) That the amended Council Procedure Rule 31, as set out in Appendix 2 be approved to come into affect immediately after the conclusion of the Council meeting on 20 October 2011 **with the following amendment:**
    - 31.2(iii) The person presiding at the meeting may require all mobile phones to be switched off at any time **if they consider that the use of devices is not conducive to the proper running of the meeting.**