WIRRAL

STANDARDS AND CONSTITUTIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
20 NOVEMBER 2018

REPORT TITLE:	Future Meeting Provision and Webcasting Outturn
REPORT OF:	Director: Governance and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)

REPORT SUMMARY

As part of continued work on the Council's Webcasting Project, this report sets out a number of options for the management of future 'high public interest' meetings of Cabinet and Council. The report also contains a draft information note to Officers and Members regarding webcasting protocol and conduct of meetings (appendix 1) and updated statistics regarding Council and Committee meetings webcast 14 May to 1 October 2018.

In addition the report provides an update on the project, and a short summary of the feedback received from Members of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee and Members' Equipment Steering Group regarding recent consultation concerning the webcasting of meetings, style of minutes and officer support at meetings.

RECOMMENDATION

The Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee is requested to:

    (1) note the options proposals and progress in respect of Wirral Council's Webcasting Project; and

    (2) endorse the draft protocol and guidance attached at report Appendix 1

    (3) recommend to Council to amend standing order 18 of the Council Procedure Rules as set out at Appendix 3

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 To ensure Members of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee have the opportunity to scrutinise and monitor the performance of the Council in relation to delivery of the Wirral Webcasting Project.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 This report provides an update on progress of the Wirral Webcasting Project. Options are included in the body of the report at paragraph 3.2.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Proposals for future meetings with high public turnout

3.1 In anticipation of high public turnout to key meetings of the Council, Cabinet and possibly Health Scrutiny a number of options have been considered by committee services. Following the installation of upgraded sound and projection equipment in the Wallasey Town Hall (WTH) Committee Rooms and webcasting of meetings via the internet, the Council has greater flexibility to handle large numbers of the public attending Council / Committee meetings at short notice. This does not mean forward planning, on site IT support and associated security can be ignored, and the Committee's views are sought on the options available.

3.2 **Meetings of Council**

Suggested Options:

a) Use of the **Wallasey Town Hall (WTH) Chamber and public gallery**, with overflow arrangements in the WTH Civic Hall (and/or Birkenhead Town Hall).

b) Use of the **WTH Chamber and public gallery**, with overflow arrangements in the WTH Committee Room 1 (and/or Birkenhead Town Hall).

Alternative Arrangements:

c) **Options as above but excluding access to the WTH public gallery** discounted - avoids public 'heckling' and interruption, but not considered to be lawful by virtue of direct exclusion of members of the public from a public meeting.

d) Use of **WTH Civic Hall** for Council meeting, with public in attendance in the Hall and Balcony – note: limited to 40 microphones.

e) Use of **Birkenhead Town Hall (BTH)** for the Council Meeting – note: little or no benefit re public access, limited to 40 microphones, layout and restricted camera options for webcasting (this does not apply to committee meetings held in BTH).

3.3   **Meetings of Cabinet and/or Health Scrutiny**

a) Use of **Committee Room 1** as at present, with extended seating into Committee Room 2 for attending public.

b) **As above** but utilising Committee Room 3 or WTH Civic Hall for public overflow.

c) Use of **WTH Civic Hall** for Cabinet / Committee meeting, with public in attendance in the Hall and Balcony.

Member Consultation Feedback Summary – Options Paper
(Meetings, Minutes and Staffing)

3.4   Further to consideration of the Options Paper by the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee (Minute 9, 29 August, 2018 refers) and Members' Equipment Steering Group - regarding the number of meetings to be webcast, future, style of meeting minutes and staffing resource - Members views were referred to the Director: Governance and Assurance. Namely:

3.5   **Meetings to be webcasting** include:

- Council, Cabinet, and Joint Strategic Commissioning Board (a Committee of the Cabinet);
- Audit and Risk Management, Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee, Planning Committee;
- All Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Call-In meetings; and
- Pensions Committee

(estimated total of 85 meetings per year)

3.6   **Meeting Minutes** – that the current minute style to be retained.

3.7   **Staffing of Webcast Meetings** - that the webcasting and clerking functions at Council Committee meetings be independent of each other.

3.8   A review of the budgetary impact of the proposed staffing arrangements within the service area will also be undertaken, and reported back as part of the annual budget process. Initial outcomes confirm that the need for an additional member of staff to oversee and operate the webcasting equipment, cameras and ensure consistent good quality web feed and video quality has had an impact on working arrangements within the busy Committee Services Section. To minimise this, cascade training has taken place and all Committee Services staff are now capable of operating the webcasting systems, avoiding the workload falling to just one or two members of the team.

3.9   Member feedback further requested that viewing statistics be reviewed at the end of the current Municipal Year to allow the system to bed in, and to provide a more comprehensive set of data than currently available at this early stage in the live project. A statistical summary of viewing figures as at 5 November, 2018 is attached at **Appendix 2** to this report.

Additional information

3.10 **Webcasting of Meetings – Notices and Guidance** Since the introduction of webcasting of meetings and the endorsement of a webcasting protocol (Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee Minute 33, 27 February, 2018 refers), Council and Committee meeting agendas are now clearly marked to inform if a meeting is scheduled for webcasting. The webpage address for live and archived videos is embedded on the agenda front page, and a statement regarding the discretion of the Chair to halt or defer filming if the business being conducted be subject to exemption under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, or if committee business is impeded, for example by reason of interruptions or a disturbance. The notices referred to above, and a general statement of introduction, are attached at **Appendix 1** to this report for information.

3.11 **Viewing Statistics.** To further assist, additional information and guidance has been produced, aimed at helping Elected Members and Officers, to assist in contributing to the effectiveness of webcast meetings, and is also attached at **Appendix 1.**

3.12 Viewing statistics e.g. most recent meeting of the Council on 15 October 2018 viewing figures (as at midday 5 November) are:

- 111 'live' views during the meeting
- 318 access views to the archive

Since introducing the webcasting of meetings the total figures for all meetings (as at midday 5 November) are as follows:

- 494 'live' views during all meetings
- 2358 access views to the archive
- 2852 Total

A breakdown of the above figures is attached at **Appendix 2.**

3.13 **Electronic Voting and improvements to the Council Chamber.** The Council Chamber Electronic Voting System was activated mid-August and ready for use. Demonstrations of the electronic voting system and screen display views for Elected Members took place on 26 September and on 3, 8 and 10 October 2018. The first Council meeting utilising the new electronic voting system took place on 15 October 2018.

3.14 Following the installation of the new electronic voting system in the Council Chamber, and consultation with Members on its usage, it was identified that the Council's Constitution would require revision of Standing Order 18(1) 'normal method of voting' should the default be altered to electronic voting as opposed to a 'show of hands'. This alteration would negate the need to suspend standing orders at the beginning of every Council meeting, to enable use of the electronic voting system at future meetings. Member's views are sought.

3.15 **Additional Monitor.** Further to Members' request, an additional Council Chamber (55" screen) Monitor was installed in the Council Chamber on 18 September 2018. Work has also been undertaken to explore the technical issues

associated with provision of real time display of voting results for the Mayor, Party Whips and Committee Officers. Initial testing of a dedicated WiFi connection for the Mayor was successfully undertaken at the Council meeting on 15 October 2018 and work is continuing in respect of linking more 'tablet' connections for future meetings.

3.16 **Public Microphone.** Investigations continue regarding the best alternative for an additional microphone (for public speakers) a purchase order has been raised as part of the procurement process, and funding for this additional equipment will be met from the existing resources. Following conversations with the system provider, it is likely that a wired microphone would provide the most robust and easily integrated option.

3.17 **Enquiries from Other Local Authorities.** In recent weeks, Wirral Committee Services have been approached by Lancashire County Council and Sefton MBC making general enquiries about the system, installation, and usage. One site visit to Wallasey Town Hall has already taken place (IT and Facilities Officers), with a further two visits expected (involving democratic services officers) who are keen to view the webcasting, microphone and electronic voting capabilities now in place at Wallasey Town Hall.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Following competitive tender process, on 8 January 2018 a contract was awarded to contractor Public-i, the leading supplier of technology and the market leader in provision of webcasting services to local councils in England and Wales.

5.2 The current contract is in place for a period of 3 years, there are no legal implications arising from the content of this report.

5.3 The method of voting is set out in the Council Procedure Rules, set out as Part 4(1) of the Constitution. These standing orders are based on the local government model standing orders for meetings. A proposed amendment to accompany the new electronic voting system is set out as **Appendix 3**, which the Committee is requested to consider.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT; STAFFING AND ASSETS

6.1 General guidance on the resource implications arising from each of the above to aid Members in their consideration of the above options, and budget costings were provided to the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee at its meeting held on 28 August 2018. The Director: Governance and Assurance will update the Committee as to the management of staffing resources arising from the Webcasting Project.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no identified risks arising directly from this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

8.1 Since its initial inception, the Webcasting Project has been the subject of a range of consultative meetings culminating in budgetary approval via Cabinet and Council in early 2017 - most recently SLT the Elected Member Steering Group and Political Leadership have been consulted on the future options for Webcasting delivery.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Draft Member guidance, draft protocol for webcast meetings / conduct at meetings.

Appendix 2 - Webcast and archived video viewing figures 14 May 2018 to 5 Nov 2018.

Appendix 3 - Council Procedure Rules, standing order 18, current and proposed.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet - Budget	20 February 2017
Council - Budget	6 March 2017
Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee	28 August 2018

Draft Protocol for Webcast Meetings

Agendas and Signage

Included in each Agenda and on signs to be displayed inside and outside the meeting room, there will be the following notice:-

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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, available on the Council's website www.wirral.gov.uk

Public seating areas will not be filmed by the Council.

Contact Officer:
Shirley Hudspeth, Civic and Committee Services Manager - 0151 691 8559

Conduct of Meetings

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 Committee Chair may also terminate or suspend the webcasting of the meeting, in accordance with this protocol. This will be confirmed by the Committee 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. I have discretion to terminate or suspend filming if, in my opinion, allowing filming to continue would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting.

Members are reminded that the cameras are activated by the sound system and that they must switch on microphones when speaking and off again when finished speaking."

Draft Guidance for Elected Members and Officers

Information aimed at assisting Elected Members and Officers in contributing the effectiveness of webcast meetings, is set out as follows:

Seating Plan

Where possible please sit in the seat that has been designated to you. This is because the cameras are pre-set so that, when activated by a microphone, the relevant Member or Officer's profile is shown on the viewing screen. If you plan to sit in a different seat, please let Committee Services know as soon as possible in advance of the meeting date. Similarly, if there is a change in terms of which Officer will be attending to speak to a report, it is important that this information is provided to Committee Services as soon as possible. It would be helpful if changes were avoided on the date of the meeting itself.

Speaking at Meetings

There are certain skills and behaviours that are helpful to be aware of when you are appearing in a webcast. You might find the following useful:

1.   Firstly and most importantly, turn your microphone on each time you speak. (Ideally, also allow a second or two for the cameras to track to your position).

2.   Make sure that you are in range of the microphone and keep your head turned towards it.

3.   Look up whilst you are speaking, this will help the microphone and camera pick up your contribution in good quality.

4.   Do not cover the microphone with your papers when standing and talking in the webcast, as this can affect the sound quality and the audience may not hear what you are saying.

5.   Do not move too much, this can reduce the picture quality and may make it necessary for tracking adjustments to be made during your speech.

6.   When you have finished speaking, turn off your microphone. A live microphone may pick up conversation not intended for broadcast.

At all times, treat every microphone as if it were live.

Microphone Noise

As with radio, TV and video conferencing, there is a risk of microphones picking up extra noises that reduce sound quality and affect a person's ability to hear what is being said. Microphones can be very sensitive and, although you and others in the room may not be aware of any interference, please avoid the following:

- Tapping pencils or rings against the microphone, water glass or desk
- Putting your IT equipment, papers or other items directly in front of the microphone
- Rustling or shuffling papers in front of the microphone

- Tapping or bumping the table
- Leaving your mobile 'phone on the table, even if set to silent (as the vibrations will be picked up)

Clothing

When considering what to wear, bear in mind all the possible camera angles and watch out for clothing or jewellery which might rub against the microphone and hinder what you are saying being heard.

Very bright colour and strong patterns can be distracting and may affect the picture quality for viewers, so are best avoided if possible.

Dry throat

Have a glass of water to hand.

Issues to Consider

Even when there is no audience in the room, members of the public may be watching the meeting via the Council's website.

When entering any password into your Surface Pro, please be discreet.

Members of the public may not be familiar with the Declarations of Interest process so, each time you make a declaration, switch on your microphone and clearly indicate the item to which your declaration refers.

Avoid acronyms and, if possible, provide a context to the debate, as members of the public watching the webcast may not be as familiar with the subject as you are.

When other people near you are speaking, please bear in might that you be still be on camera.

Webcast title	Live date	All views	Live views	Archive views	Total length of viewing	Average Viewing Time	Interactions	Times shared
Wirral Mayor Making Annual Council Part 1	14/05/18 18:45	139	15	124	20:03:51	00:08:40	0	1
Annual Full Council Part 2	15/05/18 17:45	142	10	132	14:07:56	00:05:58	2	0
Planning Committee	21/06/18 17:55	76	11	65	20:52:34	00:16:29	0	1
Council	09/07/18 17:55	100	17	83	31:19:22	00:18:48	0	0
Cabinet	16/07/18 09:50	46	5	41	04:40:49	00:06:06	0	0
Planning Committee	19/07/18 18:00	137	19	118	38:43:15	00:16:57	4	0
Cabinet	23/07/18 10:00	224	24	200	49:57:32	00:13:23	15	1
Audit and Risk Management Committee	23/07/18 18:00	57	5	52	16:02:27	00:16:53	1	0
Planning Committee	16/08/18 18:00	78	15	63	12:08:10	00:09:20	0	2
Joint Strategic Commissioning Board	21/08/18 14:00	76	3	73	11:55:45	00:09:25	0	0
Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee	29/08/18 17:00	20	1	19	02:37:35	00:07:53	0	0
Council	10/09/18 18:00	497	132	365	242:06:47	00:29:14	0	8
Adult Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Commi	12/09/18 18:00	114	12	102	34:08:07	00:17:58	0	0
Planning Committee	13/09/18 18:00	150	32	118	56:35:44	00:22:38	0	0
Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee	18/09/18 18:00	50	8	42	17:16:34	00:20:44	0	0
Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	20/09/18 18:00	165	6	159	36:06:32	00:13:08	0	1
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Commi	25/09/18 18:00	64	16	48	18:32:21	00:17:23	0	4
Cabinet	01/10/18 10:00	75	11	64	08:54:34	00:07:08	0	0
Wirral Traded Services B2B	10/10/18 13:30	14	0	14	02:34:43	00:11:03	0	0
Council	15/10/18 18:00	429	111	318	148:50:22	00:20:49	0	7
Joint Strategic Commissioning Board	16/10/18 14:00	68	19	49	13:39:12	00:12:03	0	1
Planning Committee	18/10/18 18:00	103	18	85	28:42:05	00:16:43	0	5
Pensions Committee	29/10/18 18:00	28	4	24	04:01:28	00:08:37	0	0
		2852	494	2358				

Current Standing Order

18. Voting

(1)   The normal method of voting at meetings of the Council shall be by show of hands unless the Council determines otherwise.

(2)   The Mayor may decide at any time to discontinue use of the electronic voting system if satisfied that it is not working correctly.

(3)   When the electronic voting system is being used, the Mayor may require or allow the vote to be retaken either electronically or by show of hands if he/she considers that there has been any malfunction of the equipment or any incorrect use of it.

(4)   No individual votes will be recorded in the minutes of Council unless either a "card vote" is requested pursuant to paragraph (5) hereof or a "recorded vote" is requested pursuant to paragraph (6).

(5)   If a member of the Council makes a request before a vote is taken for a "card vote" and is supported by five other members rising in their places, voting shall be by that method so as to show how all members present and voting gave their votes provided that when the electronic voting system is to be used a "card vote" shall mean only the electronic recording of such votes.

(6)   Where immediately after a vote is taken at a meeting of the Council, any member of that body so requires, there shall be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of that meeting whether that person cast his/her vote for the motion/amendment, or against the motion/amendment (a dissent) or whether he/she abstained from voting.

(7)   When the electronic voting system is not being used, a card vote may still be requested during the procedure referred to in Standing Order 9(1).

(8)   In taking a vote upon any question, only those members of the Council who are present in the Council Chamber and seated in their places when the question is put from the Chair shall be entitled to vote.

Proposed Standing Order

18. Voting

Show of Hands / Voting Equipment

(1)   Voting at Council meetings shall be as directed by the Mayor, either by a show of hands or by use of the electronic voting equipment.

(2)   The Mayor may, when the electronic voting system is being used, decide at any time to:

(a)   discontinue use of the electronic voting system if satisfied that it is not working correctly; or

(b)   require or allow the vote to be retaken either electronically or by show of hands if he/she considers that there has been any malfunction of the equipment or any incorrect use of it.

Casting Vote

(3)   The Mayor, or in his/her absence the Deputy Mayor or the Chair at the time the vote is taken shall have a second or casting vote.

Recorded Vote

(4)   Any Member of the Council can ask for a recorded vote. A request for a recorded vote will only be acceptable if it is supported by at least five other Members and is made before the Mayor has announced the result of the vote. On the proper officer proceeding to call each Member by name, the Member shall cast their vote orally, or confirm their vote orally where this takes place electronically (and in any discrepancy the oral confirmation shall be taken over votes cast electronically), and the proper officer will record by name who voted for, who voted against and who abstained.

Right to require individual votes to be recorded

(5)   At any meeting of the Council a Member may require that his or her decision in voting for or against or abstaining on an item on the Agenda be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting. This will be effective only if it is proposed by the Member before the Mayor has announced the result of the vote.

Presence when voting

(6)   In taking a vote upon any question, only those members of the Council who are present in the Council Chamber and seated in their places when the question is put from the Chair shall be entitled to vote.