

Protocol for Webcasting, Filming and Recording of Council Meetings

Background

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. 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.

Webcasting and the retention of film on the Council's website 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

1. 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 Civic Mayor / 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."
2. Webcasts will only commence at the beginning of a meeting when the Chair opens the meeting and will finish when the meeting is closed.
3. 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.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. Young people under the age of 16 will not be filmed.
7. 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. The Chief Executive will, in consultation with Group Leaders, make the final decision on editing any webcast or filmed material to be broadcast or published in connection with any Council meeting. The reason for any decision to edit a webcast or filmed material will be published.
8. 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 Assistant Director: Law and Governance 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.
9. When any editing of content occurs then the same procedure as above will be followed.
10. 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
11. 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 the Council's Website. 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 Chair

Guidance notes will also be issued to those residents in the audience at council meetings advising them to contact any member of Council staff if they have concerns about being seen on camera.

Technical Proposals

12. A digital back-up of recordings will be kept by the IT 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

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

WEBCASTING NOTICE – sample text

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the internet - at the start of the meeting the Civic Mayor / 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.

[Contact Officer:](#)
[Civic and Committee Services Manager - 0151 691 8559](#)

Filming by members of the public and press

14. 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.
15. 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. [A designated area shall be set aside for members of the press / public who wish to](#)

[film or secure a sound recording of the Council's public meetings. Any disruptive behaviour or distractions will result in the person\(s\) being asked to leave the meeting.](#)

- 16.** 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.

Audio/Visual Recording of meetings – sample text for Agenda Front Sheet

Everyone is welcome to record meetings of the Council and its Committees using whatever, non-disruptive, methods you think are suitable. If you have any questions about this please contact Democratic Services (members of the press please contact the Press Office). Please note that the Chair of the meeting has the discretion to halt any recording for a number of reasons including disruption caused by the filming or the nature of the business being conducted.

Persons making recordings are requested not to put undue restrictions on the material produced so that it can be reused and edited by all local people and organisations on a non-commercial basis.

Tweeting or blogging by members of the public and press

- 4617.** The Council permits social media reporting of all its public meetings.

Photography

- 4718.** The Council permits photography at all of its public meetings.