

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Full Council

Date: 16 April 2024

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Organisational Development and Democratic Support)

Subject: Live Streaming Council Meetings – Changes to the Constitution

Purpose and summary of report:

To present Full Council with an update on the progress of the project to Live Stream Council meetings and the installation of audio visual (AV) equipment in the Council Chamber; together with proposed amendments to the Council’s Constitution, recommended to Full Council by Cabinet.

Recommendations:

That Full Council approves the proposed amendments to the Council’s Constitution in relation to:

1. A new Annex 3.13 ‘Filming, Photographing, Audio Recording at Committee meetings’; and
2. Additional wording to be added to Annex 2.2, paragraph 5.3:

‘Members of the press and public are also entitled to report on meetings of the Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law’. – The protocol and further guidance can be found in Annex 3.13 Filming, Photographing, Audio Recording at Committee meetings.’

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	The creation of an official protocol sets out the rights of meeting attendees to film/record at meetings and determines what is permissible and what would be considered disruptive.
Finance and Value for Money	A report was taken to Cabinet and then Full Council in October 2023 for approval of the project and a budget was allocated to the project with full market testing undertaken.
Corporate Plan	Objective 3 – Progress (digital innovation).

Climate Change	Certain non-statutory meetings could be held fully virtual, reducing the need for participants and the public to travel by private or public transportation. The public would also be able to view Committees meetings from home via live stream or a recorded meeting.
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1. Update on Installation of AV Equipment in Council Chamber

- 1.1 A report was taken to Cabinet and then Full Council in October 2023 for approval of a project to procure new audio-visual equipment to record and live stream Committee meetings proceedings in the Council Chamber.
- 1.2 Following that report, a procurement exercise was conducted, and a supplier was awarded the contract. The installation of new equipment took place in January 2024.
- 1.3 Officers from Committee Services and IT Services have received all relevant training on how to use the AV equipment, microphones and the meeting management system following the installation.

2. Proposed Constitutional Changes

- 2.1 The implementation of the new audio-visual equipment to allow live streaming/recording of meetings is only one part of the overall project. Changes must also be made to how the Council operates its meetings, the website and the Council's Constitution.
- 2.2 A report was taken to Cabinet on 18 March 2024 which provided further details on how the Council will operate its meetings and the changes required to the website. It also outlined the Constitutional changes which Cabinet has recommended to Full Council for approval.
- 2.3 Constitutional changes
 - 2.3.1 The Council's Constitution will need to be updated to include rules on the filming or recording at Committee meetings. This would sit under 'Annex 3 – Codes of Practice and Protocols' under a new Annex 3.13.
 - 2.3.2 The proposed constitutional guidance on 'Filming, Photographing, Audio Recording at Committee meetings' is attached at Appendix One. This has been created using best practice found at Brighton City Council and Sevenoaks District Council.
 - 2.3.3 It is also proposed that a sentence be added to Annex 2.2, paragraph 5.3 to state that:-
 - *'Members of the press and public are also entitled to report on meetings of the Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law'. – The protocol and further guidance can be found in Annex 3.13 Filming, Photographing, Audio Recording at Committee meetings.*

3. Implementation of Live Streaming/Recording and Procedures

- 3.1 Internal tests of the system will be conducted by officers in April 2024 to ensure the system is working efficiently. Officers will use these tests to tailor the system to best suit the Council's needs, ready for its official implementation. There will also be an opportunity to record some Committee meetings, but not live stream, to test the system and provide the opportunity for review.
- 3.2 A provisional live date to implement the live streaming and recording of Committee meetings has been set for Monday, 20 May 2024; with the first Committee meeting to be live streamed being the Special Cabinet Advisory Committee. This is subject to the testing outlined above.
- 3.3 Members and lead officers will receive training and guidance on the new procedures, prior to live streaming and recording of Committee meetings being implemented.
- 3.4 Committee Chairs will receive additional training on the Council's procedural rules for dealing with disturbance by the public.
- 3.5 Committee Chairs will be asked to read an opening address during live streamed Committee meetings to inform all attendees of the live streaming. There will also be an address when moving to Part B . The proposed addresses are included at Appendix Two.
- 3.6 Lead officers will also receive relevant training on how to best use all of the new audio-visual equipment in the Council Chamber. Step-by-step guides advising how to use the equipment, create Teams Meetings and connecting a laptop for presentation purposes will be circulated. Hard copies of the guides will be stored in the Council Chamber.
- 3.7 Gravesham Borough Council will retain ownership of all video content on our YouTube channel. This will be made clear on the Council webpage.

4. Appendices

- 4.1 Appendix One – Proposed Constitutional Amendment
- 4.2 Appendix Two – Chair's Opening and Part B Speech

5. Background Documents

- 5.1 Report to Cabinet on 02 October 2023; and
- 5.2 Report to Full Council on 17 October 2023; and
- 5.3 Report to Cabinet on 18 March 2024

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Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	The proposed operational changes and changes to the Constitution will ensure that the correct procedures are in place for live streaming and recording meetings reducing risk to the Council.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data ? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No
	b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A
	c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdp@medway.gov.uk . N/A
Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes; those people who wish to attend meetings but may not be able to due to injury/illness will be able to join public meetings virtually.
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Crime and Disorder	N/A
Digital and website implications	The Digital Team would need to make amendments to the Council's website and include a dedicated page/area for Live Steaming of Committee meetings.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	During live recordings of meetings, the cameras will focus on the Members and officers in the room; the public will not be targeted by the cameras but there may be some shots where public sitting in the public gallery will be visible on the live stream/recording. As stated in the report, a notice will be placed outside the Council Chamber advising that they may be filmed.