

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

16TH MARCH 2017

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Cook

RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. Summary

Council at its meeting held on 19th November 2014 agreed to the Council recording/web-broadcasting meetings of Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee, these being meetings most likely to engage members of the public.

It was agreed also that a review of the filming and broadcasting of these meetings would take place after a period of time. This report contains recommendations from the Members Advisory Panel (MAP) who have undertaken a review of the extent to which this policy has enhanced engagement with the public and offered value for money.

2. Recommendations

Recommended that:-

1. Cabinet notes the recommendation arising from the meeting of the Members Advisory Panel as follows:-

‘That the current practice of the Council recording meetings of Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee meetings cease with effect from the 2017/18 Municipal Year.’

2. Cabinet considers whether it wishes to continue with the recording and publishing of meetings of Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

To fulfil the requirements to review the extent of engagement and value for money of the current policy to record and publish meetings of Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended that:-

1. Cabinet notes the recommendation arising from the meeting of the Members Advisory Panel as follows:-

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DETAIL

1. Following the introduction of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 introducing rights for the public to report and commentate on public meetings of local government bodies, Council at its meeting held on 19th November 2014 agreed to the Council recording/web-broadcasting meetings of Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee, these being meetings most likely to engage members of the public.
2. MAP met on 7th December 2016 and noted that for the period January 2016 – June 2016 the number of ‘views’ of meetings recorded was extremely low, and therefore the level of engagement with the public that this had enabled had proven to be disappointing.

3. The number of 'views', as registered with YouTube upon which the recordings were posted and promoted via a link on the Council's website, was as follows:-

Council – Highest recorded number of views 20th January 2016 – 173 views
–Lowest recorded number of views 6th April 2016 – 16 views.

Cabinet – Highest recorded number of views 19th May 2016 – 194 views
- Lowest recorded number of views 11th February 2016 – 18 views.

Planning – Highest recorded number of views 25th May 2016 – 209 views
- Lowest recorded number of views 5th June 2016 – 21 views.

4. The viewing figures since this time have remained modest averaging at 81 views for the period from September 2016 to present date.
5. This is considered to be a very small number of views considering the population within the Borough is 191,600 +ONS 2011 Census. The occasions on which the viewing figures have been at their highest relate to Council's consideration of public questions on Children's Homes, Cabinet's consideration for the North Shore Hotel and Planning Committee's consideration of a boutique hotel in Yarm.
6. Across the region only 5 other local authorities record and publish any of their public meetings and in each case, these meetings are restricted to full Council only.
7. The service to record the Council's Council, Cabinet and Planning Committees is currently contracted out at a cost of £10k per annum. The Council does not currently have the equipment or expertise to provide this service in house. The cost would therefore seem to be prohibitive given the level of demand for this service.
8. As there is no requirement for the Council to film and record public meetings and the Council is only required to make provision for those individuals who wish to, MAP were invited to consider whether it wished to continue with these arrangements given the level of engagement achieved to date and it subsequently agreed that:-

'The current practice of the Council recording meetings of Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee meetings cease with effect from the 2017/18 Municipal Year.'
9. It should be noted that in the time since the introduction of the legislation affording members of the public the opportunity to report and comment on public meetings, there have been no occasions when members of the public have invoked the protocol and requested permission to make their own recording of the meeting.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

10. The contract for the recording of Council meetings is £10k per annum and it is proposed that this amount be incorporated into the projected savings required by the MTFP.

Legal

11. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report other than the requirement to make provision, following the introduction of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, to allow the public to report and commentate on public meetings of local government bodies

RISK ASSESSMENT

12. The risks arising from what is proposed can be categorised as low risk.

COUNCIL PLAN IMPLICATIONS

13. Stronger Communities.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

14. There is no requirement for an assessment.

CONSULTATION

15. Via discussion and consideration by the Members Advisory Panel on 7th December 2016.

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Background Papers: Not Applicable

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Applicable

Property Implications: Not Applicable