

Protocol for Webcasting of Council and other meetings

Introduction

The Council has agreed that certain meetings should be webcast and archived and subsequently made available on the Council's web site.

Main Provisions

1. The Chair of the meeting has the discretion to suspend the webcast if, in the opinion of the Chair, continuing to webcast would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting.

This would include:

- (i) Public disturbance or other suspension of the meeting
 - (ii) Exclusion of public and press being moved and agreed
2. Archived webcasts or parts of webcasts will be removed from the Council's website if the Monitoring Officer (after consulting the Leader and Leader of the opposition group) considers that it is necessary because all or part of the content of the webcast is or is likely to be in breach of any statutory provision or common law doctrine. Such situations would include, for example, the disclosure of confidential or exempt information, potential actions for defamation or breaches of equalities, data protection, human rights or other legislation.

The grounds for not publishing would always have to outweigh the public interest in publication. In considering the public interest, the Monitoring Officer will have to exercise judgement, for example where abusive language is used by Members as part of the 'cut and thrust' of political debate. In these circumstances, the Monitoring Officer will take into account any representations made by Members and whether a Member had an opportunity to respond to or refute the comments or allegations at the meeting.

Where comments are made by Members about the conduct and capability of officers, the Council's Protocol on Member Officer Relations says:

'A Member should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an officer in a manner that is incompatible with the objectives of this Protocol. This is a long-standing tradition in public service. An officer has no means of responding to such criticism in public. If a Member feels he/she has not been treated with proper respect, courtesy or has any concern about the conduct or capability of an officer, and fails to resolve it through direct discussion with the officer, the Member should raise the matter with the respective Head of Service.'

It would generally, therefore, be inappropriate to publish those parts of an archived webcast of a meeting where this provision of the Protocol on Member Officer Relations may have been breached.

3. Any elected Member or officer who is concerned about any webcast should raise their concern with the Monitoring Officer.