

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

13th December 2016

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP - PROPOSALS

Chair of Scrutiny Group	Councillor Tom Baker-Price
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected	No specific ward relevance.
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Performance scrutiny is a key responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny process and represents national best practice. The introduction of the Council's dashboard, which provides data in respect of the local authority's strategic and operational service measures, has provided Members with an opportunity to revisit performance scrutiny in more detail. In this context the Performance Scrutiny Working Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the start of the 2016/17 municipal year to scrutinise the content of the dashboard and the implications for service performance.
- 1.2 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group will review a range of matters which may vary between meetings. Where recommendations are made at a meeting about a particular subject these will be recorded in a report and presented for Members' consideration at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3 This report details a recommendation that has been made in respect of recording of public Committee meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

- 1) the Council should trial the broadcasting of Council meetings with a view to permanent arrangements being made to broadcast appropriate meetings in future; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group at its meeting on 10th October 2016 invited the Democratic Services Manager to attend to discuss Members' attendance at training sessions and at Committee meetings. During this meeting Members also enquired about the potential for Committee meetings to be broadcast and made accessible to the public via the Council's website. Neighbouring authorities at

Birmingham City Council, Worcestershire County Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council all broadcast Committee meetings, either using web casting or audio equipment. Some of these authorities broadcast all public Committee meetings whilst other Councils broadcast meetings identified as being of interest to the public.

- 3.2 At present Redditch Borough Council does not broadcast Committee meetings. However the group recognises that there is often significant public interest in the work of particular Committees, especially the Planning Committee and Council. There are some residents who may not be able to attend Committee meetings, due to other commitments or to having mobility problems, who might be interested in items on the agenda.
- 3.3 Minutes are taken at Committee meetings but, in line with best practice, these provide a record of the proceedings rather than a verbatim account. A recording, either audio or visual, available to access from the Council's website, would help to provide residents with access to more information about proceedings at these meetings.
- 3.4 In this context the group is proposing that consideration should be given to undertaking a trial to broadcast particular Council meetings with a view to introducing permanent broadcasting arrangements in future. As part of the trial an opportunity would be provided to explore broadcasting arrangements that best meet the needs of Redditch residents. The group envisage that any Committee meeting open to the public, not just full Council, could be recorded as part of this trial.
- 3.5 At the end of the process the group propose that the outcomes of the trial should be evaluated and reported for consideration of the Executive Committee. Subject to these outcomes the Executive Committee may subsequently choose to broadcast all or some Committee meetings or may conclude that broadcasting is not required in future.

Financial Implications

- 3.6 The group has been advised that the costs involved in recording Committee meetings would vary depending on the option selected by the Council for this purpose. There are some web casting and audio recording companies that charge the Council for hosting broadcasts. There is also the option for a local authority to negotiate to pay some organisations on a meeting by meeting basis, with broadcasts arranged in cases where significant public interest is anticipated.
- 3.7 Members of the group have highlighted that social media might be used which has no direct cost. In order to minimise the financial costs to the Council involved in broadcasting Committee meetings Members are suggesting that this option should be investigated further during the suggested trial. However, Members have been advised that the audibility of some recordings provided using this can be limited in some cases and therefore might not meet the needs of the public.

Legal Implications

- 3.8 From time to time Members are required to consider confidential information which is considered exempt in line with legislation detailed in Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee is asked to note that it would not be appropriate to record Members' debates during consideration of such items and this would need to be clarified with interested stakeholders if the Council decides to record meetings in the future.
- 3.9 If the Council agrees at the end of the trial to introduce permanent broadcasting arrangements consideration will need to be given to the procurement implications. Officers will need to ensure that procurement rules are followed where applicable.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.10 The introduction of broadcasting arrangements at Committee meetings could potentially have implications for the Democratic Services team. Depending on the form of broadcasting selected by the Council time might be required from Officers to set up and maintain equipment during meetings. Sufficient time would also be needed to upload broadcast material onto the Council's website.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 Broadcasting of Committee meetings could help to enhance the transparency of the Council's decision making process for customers.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

If a trial of broadcasting meetings is undertaken successfully there is a risk of raising expectations about it becoming a permanent arrangement which may not be affordable depending on the approach taken.

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