

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Head of Corporate Strategy

TO: Civic Affairs Committee

21/3/2012

WARDS: All

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S AUDIO AND VISUAL RECORDING PROTOCOL

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Committee agreed to make amendments in February 2011 to the then-entitled filming protocol which had been in place since July 2010. The Committee also agreed to review the amended protocol, renamed Audio and Visual Recording Protocol, in March 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to recommend to Council:

- 2.1 The changes to the Audio and Visual Recording Protocol in 3.2 (i)-(iii)

3. THE AUDIO/VISUAL RECORDING PROTOCOL

- 3.1 The Minister for Local Government Bob Neil wrote to Council Leaders and Monitoring Officers in February 2011 (after Committee had met to consider the protocol) ‘...highlighting the importance of councils giving citizens the opportunity to access and experience their local democracy using modern communication methods.’ The letter is appended to this report so the committee can take the Government’s view into account when reviewing the protocol which is appended with the changes suggested in the following paragraph.
- 3.2 Since the Committee approved the amendments to the audio/visual recording protocol in February 2011, there have been no applications to record council meetings. There is no evidence to suggest that the Protocol has put off the public from wanting to record. Prior to a

number of filming requests in the autumn of 2010, filming or photography at meetings had been rare, the only regular event being the Mayor making ceremony each May. However, that said, there are some suggested practical amendments to some of the prescriptive parts of the protocol which the Committee is asked to consider:

- (i) Requiring an applicant to give 3 working days notice and no more that 2 weeks in advance – This could be considered restrictive and could be conceived as being in conflict with the Council’s policy on being open and transparent. It is recommended that this be changed to 10am the day before a meeting, in line with the public question time scheme which better reflects the expectations of those likely to apply to record.
- (ii) Delete the reference to time limiting to 2 minutes the use of flash photography/lighting – This is could be considered too prescriptive. The Chair can make the judgement at the time of each request and officers consider this to be adequate to ensure a meeting is not disrupted.
- (iii) Make an exception so that anyone can record during the ceremonial part of the Annual Meeting of the Council - Mayor making is a well attended occasion with guests of the in-coming and out-going Mayors, newly elected councillors as well as guests of the Mayor who are invited to see local democracy in action, e.g. schoolchildren. Currently the Mayor has to make an announcement that recording is allowed that would continue but it is sensible to set this out in the protocol as well for the avoidance of doubt.

3.3 In considering these changes, the Committee is reminded that the protocol includes the statement ‘any decision taken by the chair on the interpretation of this protocol is final’.

4. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Head of Human Resources and the trade unions will be consulted on the changes proposed.

5. **OPTIONS**

Instead of the recommendation in the report, the Committee could:

consider further amendments to the protocol; or
delete the protocol and refuse recording of any council meetings; or

delete the protocol and permit recording at any meetings, with no restrictions other than those meetings or part of meetings which are exempt from the public; or
decide to record its meetings (recent enquiries estimated £14,000 per year for it to be done professionally).

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Financial Implication**

There are none.

(b) **Staffing Implications** (if not covered in Consultations Section)

The possibility of audio/visual recording of senior council staff at council meetings is to be expected and was consulted on prior to the adoption of the revised protocol last February.

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been conducted on the proposals in this report. Enabling meetings to be filmed and broadcast opens up the Council's decision making process and is in accordance with council objectives. The Committee had undertaken a thorough review of the protocol, reported in February 2011. Equal opportunity implications are likely to be addressed by the Council's operating procedures (e.g. access to information and meetings), rather than the specific proposals in this report.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

As part of this section, assign a climate change rating to your recommendation(s) or proposals.

- Nil: to indicate that the proposal has no climate change impact.

(e) **Community Safety**

There are none.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

Civic Affairs Committee report and minutes 2/2/11

To inspect these documents and contact officer for queries on the report is Gary Clift 01223 457011 gary.clift@cambridge.gov.uk