

North Tyneside Council

Report to Standards Committee

Date: 19 June 2014

ITEM

Title: Webcasting of
Authority Meetings

Report from Directorate: Chief Executive's Office

Report Author: Vivienne Geary, Monitoring Officer (Tel: 643 5339)

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Governance and Employment

Wards affected: All

1.1 Purpose:

To provide a report on the use of video cameras in Authority meetings and the draft Regulations in relation to the webcasting of such meetings.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

The Committee is requested to note this report.

1.3 Information

The Committee at its March 2014 meeting discussed how to improve ethical standards and the behaviour of Members. Reference was made to inappropriate text messaging, tweeting, talking, eating etc. during meetings, which could be off-putting to others during debate and decision making.

It was proposed as a part of the Committee's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members, that the Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Standards Committee, the Authority's Independent Persons and the Group Leaders, meet to consider the use of video cameras at Council meetings as a means of improving Member behaviour.

Since the Committee's last meeting draft regulations (The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014) have been laid before Parliament for approval which will require local authorities to allow persons to report and commentate on public authority meetings. However, they will not permit the public to film meetings in which confidential or exempt information will be disclosed.

Officers are monitoring the progress of the Regulations through Parliament to ascertain when they are likely to come into force.

When in force, the Regulations will allow any person to attend a public meeting of an authority for the purpose of reporting and to use any communication methods, including the internet, to share the results of their reporting activities, during or after the meeting.

Reporting includes filming, photographing or audio recording of proceedings. Authorities may require oral commentary to be provided outside of the meeting (presumably, to avoid disruption).

This Authority has not previously permitted film or audio recording of its Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings. It will, once the Regulations come into force, be appropriate to introduce signage to meeting rooms to advise members, officers and the public that the meetings may be recorded in those formats and to request that recording focuses upon the public meeting, rather than, for example, filming members of the public who may be intimidated by the presence of cameras.

While the Regulations do not require the Authority to film or audio record its meetings, this is something which will be considered. Officers are collating information regarding the options available to audio record or film meetings, including the potential to webcast meetings and are liaising with other local authorities in the region as to their current and future arrangements.

The Committee are therefore requested to note this development in relation to the webcasting of meetings. Further information will be provided to the Committee and Members in relation to the implementation of the Regulations as more information becomes available.

1.4 Appendices:

None

1.5 Contact officers:

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1.6 Background information:

Minutes of Standards Committee Meeting – 6 March 2014
The draft Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

Stephen Ballantyne

Report author.....