



**CORPORATE & ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
12 OCTOBER 2017**

CABINET: 7 NOVEMBER 2017

COUNCIL: 13 DECEMBER 2017

Report of: Borough Solicitor

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SUBJECT: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AT MEETINGS – REVISED PROTOCOL

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider proposed revisions to the protocol for public speaking at meetings of Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee and other related matters raised at the Public Involvement at Meetings Working Group.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND CABINET

2.1 That the revised 'Public Speaking – Protocol' for meetings of Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed and submitted to Council on 13 December 2017 for approval.

2.2 That it be noted that a regular press release will be produced highlighting public speaking timescales.

2.3 That the current facilities/arrangements for people with disabilities accessing meetings of the Council, set out in paragraph 6 of the report, be noted.

2.4 That the continuation of the Working Group to allow it to consider the introduction of webcasting at meetings, the associated costs and any potential budget growth item, as detailed in paragraph 7 of the report, be noted and endorsed.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

3.1 That the revised 'Public Speaking – Protocol' for meetings of Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, taking into consideration the

comments of the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Appendix 3) and Cabinet (Appendix 4).

- 3.2 That Section 14.1 of the Constitution be updated accordingly and published on the Council's website.

4.0 REVISIONS TO THE PROTOCOL

- 4.1 At its meeting on 21 April 2017 the Public Involvement in Meetings Working Group reviewed the current arrangements in relation to public involvement in meetings 12 months after its implementation and agreed an amended protocol at its last meeting held on 20 September 2017.
- 4.2 The revised Protocol, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, has been redesigned to take into account suggestions put forward by the Working Group at its meeting in April. As revised (if approved) this would allow:
public speaking at the commencement of the appropriate item on the agenda, rather than at the start of the meeting; and
an extension of the deadline for submitting requests by Members of the public .
- 4.3 As the report is being considered by Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 12 October, Cabinet on 7 November and Council on 13 December 2017 the first meeting for operation of any agreed revisions would be Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2018.

5.0 PUBLICITY

- 5.1 Currently, publicity arrangements include a page on the Council's website, all agendas are published on the website and an agenda sheet is placed on the Council's noticeboard. A press release is produced prior to each Cabinet meeting, which sets out the deadline for submitting requests to speak at future meetings of Audit & Governance Committee, Scrutiny Committees, Standards Committee and Cabinet, to promote these arrangements to members of the public.

6.0 DISABLED ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPEAKERS

- 6.1 Meetings held in the Council Chamber and Cabinet & Committee Room are accessible for speakers who are wheelchair users/people with limited mobility. There is a disabled access in the Council Chamber and a designated space to park a wheelchair (if users so wish), a roaming microphone is also available from Member Services.

7.0 USE OF WEBCAM RECORDING AT MEETINGS

- 7.1 The Working Group also considered the future use of webcasting and recording at meetings. Initial estimates in the region of £40,000 were received from two providers of public sector live streaming services. A full survey of the meeting rooms would be required to give a more detailed cost analysis, which would take into consideration the current audio system.

7.2 Members of the Working Group agreed to extend its work to further consider the introduction of webcasting at meetings and the associated costs, with a view to considering a future budget growth item, if appropriate. A suitable procurement process would be required to firm up any arrangements, including a full assessment of any other additional resources required.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

8.1 The provision of public involvement in meetings provides another method to enable local people to raise concerns or state their views to the Council providing an additional feedback mechanism for the community and improving access for all.

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The revised protocol can be accommodated within existing resources.

9.2 There is currently no budget for the provision of a webcasting system, therefore if Members wish to take this option forward a decision by Cabinet and/or Council would be required to authorise the additional costs required to take this project forward.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 The report provides an opportunity to further develop transparency and openness through public involvement at meetings.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required, a formal equality impact assessment is attached as Appendix 1 to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report

Appendices

1. Revised 'Public Speaking – Protocol' (Constitution 14.1)
2. Equality Impact Assessment
3. Minute of the Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 12 October 2017 (Cabinet and Council only)
4. Minute of the Cabinet held on 7 November 2017 (Council only)