



## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Subject Heading:**

Webcasting: Review of provision

**SLT Lead:**

Alison McKane, Interim Deputy Director of  
Legal and Governance

Alison.mckane@oneSource.co.uk

**Report Author and contact details:**

Zena Smith, Interim Head of Democratic  
Services.

zena.smith@havering.gov.uk

**Policy context:**

Webcasting is a means of making the  
Council's decision-making procedures  
open and accessible to its stakeholders

**Financial summary:**

Limiting the live webcasting to specific  
Meetings will enable costs to be met  
within the existing budget.

### SUMMARY

Havering Council has been 'webcasting' meetings of Full Council and Cabinet since December 2009. In response to the COVID pandemic, there was a statutory requirement to webcast all meetings; this ran from April 2020 to July 2021. Since then the council has continued to webcast all meetings pending a decision on what future webcasting provision should include.

Officers have considered options with lead members and considered which meetings should continue to be webcast, taking into account viewing numbers and costs.

Having canvassed other London Boroughs, those offering webcasting are either adopting the system currently being used at Havering, or they have an alternative supplier offering a similar spec or they have had a complete refurbishment of the rooms where Council Meetings take place.

As part of this process an options paper was presented to the Architect Design Board for consideration. Options considered were to:

- Upgrade the existing System
- Consider alternative Providers
- Use of MS Teams/YouTube
- Inclusion in the Town Hall Refurbishment Specification

Having considered the available options it appears that whilst the use of Teams is an option for Committee Rooms 1 and 2/Meeting Rooms within the Town Hall complex, it is not an option for the Council Chamber. This is because Teams is not compatible with the existing system in use in the Council Chamber, which involves having links to a Voting system, tracking cameras and Microphones. The same issue applies to the use of YouTube for webcasting meetings.

Viewing figures in Appendix 1 show that Council, Cabinet and Planning Committees generate the highest number of online views. Whilst Licensing Committee is better suited to the Council Chamber as it has the potential for a higher number of in person viewing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following evaluation of all options the Committee agrees that:

- The current system used in the Council Chamber is upgraded, therefore improving the quality and reducing the risk of equipment failure.
- The following meetings are held in the Council Chamber:  
Council, Cabinet, Planning Committee, Strategic Planning Committee and Licensing Sub-Committees.
- All other meetings are held in meeting rooms within the Town Hall complex.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

### Introduction

1. As part of its commitment to improving engagement with local people, the Council commenced the webcasting of meetings of Full Council and Cabinet in December 2009.
2. Those arrangements remained in place until the outbreak of COVID. The Coronavirus Act 2020 introduced temporary regulations which required that all council meetings had to be broadcast whilst virtual meetings were in operation.

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3. Attached in Appendix 1 are viewing figures from June 2021 – July 2022 live views and playback. The meetings of Full Council, Cabinet and Planning have the highest viewing figures.
4. The Town Hall Council Chamber has limited space to accommodate viewing public with admission granted on a first come first served basis. The webcasting arrangement has therefore enhanced the opportunity for democratic engagement.
5. The current equipment and broadcasting quality has become less reliable, and on occasion resulted in broadcasting failure in recent months. This is primarily due to the age of the equipment and requirement of a system upgrade.
6. All other meetings should be held in meeting rooms within the Town Hall complex. These meetings are likely to be more suited to a board room style set up, and would benefit from a less formal environment. This would allow for the Council Chamber to become available for other bookings, as well as reduce the burden on attendance of Democratic Services staff. These meetings will benefit from the new audio/visual system within the Town Hall, which have the facility to record meetings. Recordings will be made available on the website the following day to view.

### **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

#### **Financial implications and risks:**

By agreeing to the recommendations in the report these changes can be met within the existing budget.

#### **Legal implications and risks:**

There is no legal obligation to webcast council meetings, either in audio or visual format.

#### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no HR implications and risks associated with the report.

#### **Equalities implications and risks:**

There are no direct equalities implications or risks, however any provision for the webcasting of council meetings is considered to enhance Council compliance with equalities legislation and helps to promote knowledge of local democracy decision-making.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None