

## **RECORDING OF MEETINGS**

### **Governance Committee - 29 January 2014**

Report of Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: No

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This report supports the Key Aim of Effective Use of Council Resources

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**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Fleming

**Contact Officer(s)** Mrs Christine Nuttall – Chief Officer Legal and Governance

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#### **Recommendation to the Governance Committee:**

To consider the benefits and practicalities of the audio recording of certain meetings.

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**Reason for recommendation:** With present technology anyone can record any meetings undetected which opens the possibility of challenge.

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#### **Introduction and Background**

1 The Council's Constitution states that in relation to the Photography and Recording of Meetings the consent of Members present at any meeting shall be required before any person may record, broadcast or photograph proceedings at the meeting. Any recording, broadcasting or photography shall be conducted in a manner to be directed by the Chairman and shall cease immediately if either:

- Members so resolve; or
- The Chairman so directs.

3 The Department for Communities and Local Government are encouraging the public to report on meetings, allowing the filming of councillors and officers at meetings that are open to the public including the social media reporting of meetings.

As a result of the above information the Governance Committee Working Group looked into the benefits of recording Council meetings which were concluded to be as follows:

- With present technology anyone can record any meeting undetected which opens the possibility of challenge as to what was said at the meeting.

- The Council will have a true record of what was said in the event of an edited version being produced.

### **Matters to be Considered**

4. The Governance Committee Working Group considered that the recording of Council meetings in the Council Chamber could be feasible as this is an area already wired for sound.
5. The I.T. Department of the Council are looking into the practicalities of recording in the Council Chamber with some testing needing to take place and the cost evaluated.
6. The recording could be made available to the public in the event of a challenge by the public taking place.
7. Information in relation to what recording is taking place at other councils indicates that Dartford Council and Tonbridge and Malling Council currently undertake no recording of meetings. Tunbridge Wells Council is undertaking a trial run in relation to recording Full Council.
8. The Governance Committee Working Group considered how attendees could be informed that recording was taking place. They concluded that this could be achieved by an explanation being given at the bottom of the Agenda warning people that recording may take place.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

The financial cost and feasibility of recording will need to take place. On balance the investment needed to install recording equipment would need to be justified against the benefit of an audio recording.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Governance Committee Working Group considered that with present technology anyone can record any meeting undetected which opens the possibility of challenge as to what was said if we do not have our own recording which the Council can guarantee has not been 'edited'.

#### Resource (non financial)

Members of the public may on occasion ask to listen to recordings and Freedom of Information requests may be submitted in this regard. These requests would need to be accommodated where at the time of the request the relevant recording still exists and has not been deleted. The costs, in terms of officer time, could become an issue if they were regularly requested to search for individual comments made by Members.

## Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The introduction of recording certain Council Meetings enables there to be a true copy of what was said.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

### **Conclusions**

The Governance Committee Working Group concluded that the need on occasion to clarify what may have taken place at a council meeting, if issues of accuracy are raised, may make it desirable for some Council meetings to be recorded in the future.

### **Background Papers:**

[Sevenoaks District Council Constitution](#)

[Department for Community and Local Government  
"Your council's cabinet – going to its meetings,  
seeing how it works – a guide for local people"](#)

**Mrs Christine Nuttall**  
**Chief Officer for Legal and Governance**