

Agenda Item	15
Report No	HC/22/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Date: 29 June 2017

Report Title: Review of Protocols – Webcasting and Videoconferencing

Report By: Depute Chief Executive /Director of Corporate Development

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report highlights proposed changes to the current Protocols for Videoconferencing and Webcasting of meetings.

1.2 Copies of the current versions of the Protocols can be found on the Council website –

http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12119/video_conferencing_protocol

http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12120/webcasting_protocol

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Council is asked to consider and agree the proposed changes to the Protocol for Videoconferencing - attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.2 The Council is also asked to consider the current Protocol for Webcasting – attached as Appendix 2 to this report – and agree that there are no further changes required at this time.

3. Protocol for Videoconferencing

3.1 Members are advised that the main changes to the Protocol for Videoconferencing relate to the following –

Location –

Previously there was a list of proposed locations – Council premises – from which videoconferencing could be permitted.

It is now proposed that videoconferencing will be permitted from any location where a link can be established and secured – on the basis that this will require the prior approval of the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development.

Advance Notice –

Previously, there was a requirement for 24 hours notice to be given if a Member wished to videoconference into a meeting.

On the basis of an extension to the list of locations, it is now proposed that a minimum of 3 working days notice (excluding the day of the meeting) should be given in each case.

3.2 Highland Licensing Board -

Members are reminded that, in line with current statutory regulations, videoconferencing is not permitted in respect of attendance at Highland Licensing Board meetings.

4. Protocol for Webcasting

4.1 Members are advised that – having considered the current Protocol for Webcasting – it is not considered that any further changes are required at this time.

5. Implications

5.1 There are no specific Resource, Legal, Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural), Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk or Gaelic implications.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development

Date: 20 June 2017

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF VIDEO-CONFERENCING FACILITIES

The following protocol shall be adopted in relation to the conduct of all meetings of the Council and its various Committees and Sub-Committees (with the exception of the Highland Licensing Board). Participation via video conferencing will be permitted from *locations agreed in advance with the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and where a secure videoconference link can be established.*

Prior to the Meeting

- 1) Any Member wishing to participate by video-conference link in any meeting of the Council, or of a Committee or Sub-Committee, must intimate his/her request in writing to the Clerk not less than *3 working days* in advance of the meeting taking place (*excluding the day of the meeting*)
 - a. Please note that the procedure and timescales quoted in Paragraph 1 of this protocol in regard to participation by video-conference link will also apply to any other person who is required to take part in a hearing (with the exception of the Licensing Board).
- 2) The Clerk will immediately notify the Convener, or the relevant Chair, and will take steps to ensure that the requested venue is available throughout the required period, that the link can be established, that support for this link and for the Member using it can be provided, and that all associated facilities, e.g. telephone, email, are available.
- 3) For the avoidance of doubt, the Convener/Chair may not participate remotely.
- 4) In the case of a number of requests being received for the establishment of multiple remote links for the same meeting, such requests will be considered in chronological order of receipt until the maximum number that the equipment can support has been reached, subject to priority being given to voting members of the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee (including as a result of a successful "local member" request under Standing Order 13.2).
- 5) Details of email facilities at the remote venue must be verified and tested.
- 6) The video-conference link must be established and tested before the commencement of the meeting.
- 7) The video-conferencing equipment must be arranged in such a way that the Chair can see the remote Member(s), as well as those present in the Chamber or meeting room (Standing Order 23 refers: "A member wishing to speak will attract the Convener's attention by raising his or her hand").

At the meeting

- 8) The Convener or Chair will confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that he/she can see and hear all participating Members. Any Member participating by remote link must also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that he/she can see and hear the proceedings at the main venue and at all other remote links.
- 9) Any Member participating by remote link who declares an interest in any item of business in terms of Standing Order 21 and is either required to leave the room or determines to do so, shall leave the room at the remote venue.
- 10) Should any aspect of the video-conference link fail, the Convener or Chair will call a short adjournment of up to fifteen minutes to determine whether the link can quickly be re-established. If not re-established within this time, the Convener or Chair will temporarily

suspend discussion of the item under consideration at the time of link failure and continue with the remaining agenda items. Efforts should continue to re-establish the link. The Convener or Chair will return to the suspended item on re-establishment, or on confirmation that this cannot be done, or before the end of the meeting, whichever is the earliest. For clarity, the item under consideration at the point of any re-establishment of a link will be concluded before returning to the suspended item.

- 11) In the event of link failure, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure of the equipment and if the link cannot be re-established before the end of the meeting (as detailed in 10) then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item. If the link is successfully re-established then the remote Member(s) will deem to have returned at the point of re-establishment.
- 12) Should a remote Member wish to move a motion or amendment, which, in accordance with Standing Order 25.1 must be “given in writing to the Clerk”, the Member will arrange for this to be emailed on his/her behalf. If necessary, a short adjournment should be called to allow delivery of the email to the Clerk. Should the email equipment transmission fail, back-up arrangements for transmission by email should be available.
- 13) A remote Member participating in a vote will cast his/her vote as if participating in a roll call vote.

Planning Applications Committees/Licensing Committee

- 14) As the Council must be able to demonstrate that decisions of a regulatory nature are taken on the basis of the same information being available to all Members involved in the decision, any additional papers tabled at a meeting of a Planning Applications Committee or a Licensing Committee must be *emailed* to the remote venue and time allowed, by a short adjournment if necessary, for these to be delivered to and read by the remote Member.
- 15) Similarly, to help ensure that a remote Member can clearly follow any officer presentation, separate copies of the presentation should be shown simultaneously at all remote venues, in addition to using the video-conferencing link.
 - a. Please note that Paragraphs 14 and 15 will also apply to any other person who is required to take part in a Hearing.

Confidential/Exempt Items

- 16) If a remote Member wishes to participate in discussion of a confidential/exempt item, he/she must verify that the venue is secure, that no member of the public has access and that no recording of the proceedings is being made.

Appointments

- 17) Standing Order 30 refers. A remote Member may participate on the same basis as the other Members present in an Election, Selection or Appointment of Members of the Council to any particular office, Committee or other Group or outside body where the Council determines that the vote will be by show of hands. If the vote is taken by electronic ballot, the remote Member will require to state his/her preferences via the link and will not be able to enjoy confidentiality. If the vote is taken by paper ballot, the remote Member may participate by *email*. In such a case, time must be allowed, by a short adjournment if necessary, for remote votes to be delivered to the Clerk.

Highland Council

Protocol for the Webcasting of Council and Other Meetings

This Protocol has been drawn up to assist the conduct of webcast meetings and to ensure that in doing so the Council is compliant with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Prior to the Meeting

Agenda Front Sheets and Signage at Meetings

On the front of each agenda for designated meetings, on signs to be displayed inside and outside the Chamber and on all other material advertising the meeting, there will be the following notice:-

"Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live webcast and subsequent archiving for public access via the Council's internet site. At the start of the meeting the Chair will advise all present that the meeting is being webcast.

Generally the public seating areas will not be filmed. However by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Clerk prior to the Meeting."

Conduct of Meetings

At the start of each meeting to be filmed, an announcement will be made to the effect that the meeting is being webcast, and that the Chair may also terminate or suspend the webcasting of the meeting should the Chair consider this desirable to maintain the proper running of the meeting. This will be confirmed by the Chair making the following statement:-

"It is the Council's agreed practice to film this meeting for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site.

The Chair of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend filming, if in the opinion of the Chair continuing to do so would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting or if the Chair, on advice, considers that continued filming might infringe the rights of any individual."

Other Recording or Broadcasting of Meetings

No form of photography, filming, recording or broadcasting of meetings (other than webcasting for the Council's purposes) shall take place except with the express permission given in advance by the Chair at his/her discretion.

Cessation of Webcasting for Private Sessions

No part of any meeting will be webcast after Members have passed the resolution excluding the press and public because there is likely to be disclosure of exempt or confidential information. The Clerk of the Committee will ensure that webcasting of the meeting has ceased and will confirm this to the Chair of the meeting before any discussion of exempt or confidential matters is commenced.

Procedural Issues

Cameras are activated by the microphones in the Chamber so Members must switch these on when speaking and switch off thereafter.

Radio microphones do not activate the cameras so where speakers have a presentation they must either stand at the podium or use one of the static microphones at their seat.

If a technical fault develops, the Chair should agree a short delay to see if problem can be resolved. If after 15 minutes problem still exists meeting should continue irrespective of it not being recorded.