GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE	Agenda Item 12
	Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	**Review of Webcasting**
Date of Meeting:	**7 July 2009**
Report of:	**Acting Director of Strategy & Governance**
Contact Officer: Name:	**Mark Wall** Tel: **29-1006**
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Wards Affected: All	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.   SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1   The Governance Committee approved a pilot project for the webcasting of meetings in July 2008 and meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Planning Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Commission have been web cast since September 2008.

1.2   With the pilot project coming to an end in June 2009, it is appropriate for the Governance Committee to review the pilot and to decide whether or not to continue with the webcasting of meetings.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1   That the Committee approves the continued provision of webcasting based on the options outlined in paragraph 3.15 of the report

2.2   That the Committee approves the revised Webcasting Protocol attached at Appendix 2.

3.   RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Review of the Project

3.1   Since September 2008, the council has regularly webcast a range of meetings with the objective of taking advantage of new technologies that allow local authorities to engage with the public in differing ways (appendix 1 gives a breakdown of viewing figures). Installation of the equipment took place in June 2008, with fixed cameras being installed in the two town halls and an R600 mobile webcasting unit being transported between the two sites as necessary. Training was also completed in June, and the webcasting of meetings began in September with:

- Full Council
- Cabinet

- Planning Committee
- Overview & Scrutiny Commission
- Unique events (such as the *Armed Forces Heroes* webcast)

3.2   At present there are approximately 50 local authorities in England and Wales which regularly webcast meetings, events and projects (see appendix 3).

3.3   The pilot project has been provided in partnership with Public-i, who are a company based in Hove and provide a number of authorities such as Bristol and East Sussex with a web casting facility.   The system provided for a number of fixed cameras to be sited in the council chambers which then link to a portable base unit which feeds the information direct to Public-i's own server and then onto the internet. The portable system also enables smaller meetings to be web cast as there is a remote camera provided e.g. Cabinet Member meetings.

3.4   The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Teams undertook to facilitate the pilot project by supporting the web casting of meetings. Staff in both teams undertook training in the use of the equipment and have then managed the webcasting of individual meetings.

3.5   The webcasting of meetings provides an additional means of communicating the decision-making process and informing the electorate of the actions of the council. It provides access to those who are unable to attend Council meetings in person due to work, family or other commitments and thereby considerably extends the transparency of the Council's decision making. It is also in line with the Government's aim for local authorities to engage with the objectives set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Bill currently going through the House of Commons.

3.6   There is a potential to expand the use of the facility to enable two-way communication of issues and views, making use of e-petitions (which are a requirement for Councils in the Local Democracy Bill), on-line debating forums, giving information on projects and seeking views on developments.

3.7   The success of a project such as this can be measured in many ways, including the examination of viewing figures, seeking the opinions of those who have used the service for more detailed feedback, and a simple comparison of how many members of the public view the webcasts in comparison to the number of them who physically attend meetings.

3.8   During the pilot programme, the webcasting of council meetings has received little promotion (in order to give the Council time to get the systems right). Publicity would normally be considered key to the success or failure of a project such as this – if people do not know that they can view council meetings online, comparatively few will come across the service by chance. This is somewhat counterbalanced by the character of Brighton residents – politically curious, internet and technologically adept – and therefore the

programme has been more successful without the level of promotion that may be required to make a webcasting project successful in other areas.

3.9   Inevitably with the introduction of webcasting there have been some teething problems with the quality of picture & sound, loss of webcasts and access to them. Throughout the pilot project officers have worked with Public-i and Sound Advice (the company responsible for the microphone system), to address these problems. Further training for staff is planned in terms of the use of the cameras to provide for easier watching of broadcasts and the siting of the actual cameras in Hove Town Hall will be reviewed should the webcasting of meetings be extended.

3.9.1   Samples of recent viewing figures are as follows:

	Activity Type	Title	Live date	Activity	Live	Archive	Category
	Webcast	Council	19 Mar 2009	**166**	46	120	Full Council
	Webcast	Overview & Scrutiny Commission	10 Mar 2009	**142**	15	127	Scrutiny
	Webcast	Council	30 Apr 2009	**140**	32	108	Full Council
	Webcast	Planning Committee	18 Mar 2009	**117**	28	89	Planning
	Webcast	Planning Committee	29 Apr 2009	**109**	50	59	Planning

Activity shows the total amount of viewings that each webcast has received; **live** is the number of live viewers watching the meeting as it takes place, and **archive** displays the number of viewings that have taken place after the meeting has concluded.

3.9.2   These figures are impressive and ably demonstrate a number of important pieces of evidence:

- There is a regular audience for the webcasting of B&HCC council meetings
- These meetings are watched live as well as after the meeting has concluded
- Significantly more people watch online than attend meetings in person

3.9.3   A look back at older webcasts that have been available to view online for a protracted period of time makes even more impressive reading:

	Activity Type	Title	Live date	Activity	Live	Archive	Category
	Webcast	Council	04 Dec 2008	**690**	60	628	Full Council
	Webcast	Full Council Meeting	09 Oct 2008	**628**	127	498	Full Council
	Webcast	Planning Committee	12 Dec 2008	**606**	199	406	Planning
	Webcast	Planning Committee	04 Feb 2009	**438**	288	150	Planning

As you can see, the 4th December Council webcast has received nearly 700 viewings since it was made available, which can only be considered a great success.

3.9.4 Finally, it is also possible to look at the numbers of unique visitors to B&HCC webcasts. Since October 2008 to May 2009, there have been a total of **39,576** separate viewings, with **3,083** unique visitors – meaning that over 3,000 different people have been taking an active interest in B&HCC's democratic processes, that may otherwise have not done so – or been able to do so, if you consider those that are physically unable to attend meetings in person.

Comparative statistics

3.10 When you consider these viewings statistics against other local authorities, whose webcasting projects are well established and receive a reasonable degree of promotion, it is not difficult to imagine that with a concerted engagement project in place and with marketing support; Brighton & Hove could become UK leaders in this kind of participation.

3.10.1 East Sussex County Council*
East Sussex CC has been webcasting from the fixed installation in their Council Chamber since December 2003: *ESCC Sample viewing stats*

	Activity Type	Title	Live date	Activity	Live	Archive	Category
	Webcast	County Council - 10 February 2009	10 Feb 2009	**245**	58	187	Full Council
	Webcast	Cabinet Meeting - 12 January 2005	12 Jan 2005	**213**	0	212	Cabinet
	Webcast	County Council - 31 March 2009	31 Mar 2009	**209**	48	161	Full Council
	Webcast	Cabinet Meeting - 26 January 2009	26 Jan 2009	**203**	0	203	Cabinet
	Webcast	Planning Committee - 25 March 2009	25 Mar 2009	**172**	20	152	Planning

3.11 Bristol City Council has a proven track record of using new technology to broaden democratic engagement through webcasting, e-petitions, discussion forums and campaign creation, and is one of the leaders in eDemocracy in the UK. Whilst B&HCC's viewing figures are not currently at the same level, they still compare favourably, an examination of how Bristol has achieved these figures is detailed in appendix 4:

Bristol CC sample viewing stats

	Activity Type	Title	Live date	Activity	Live	Archive	Category
	Webcast	Full Council (Extraordinary meeting)	10 Feb 2009	543	170	372	Full Council
	Webcast	Next Generation Roadshow - High speed broadband in your community	31 Mar 2009	501	221	271	Conference
	Webcast	Development Control (South and East) Committee	18 Feb 2009	302	86	216	Development Control
	Webcast	Full Council	28 Apr 2009	287	118	169	Full Council
	Webcast	Sustainable Travel Select Committee	25 Feb 2009	274	30	241	Development
	Webcast	Comprehensive Area Assessment seminar	30 Mar 2009	249	48	201	Conference
	Webcast	Full Council	31 Mar 2009	244	73	171	Full Council

The Case for Webcasting

3.12   Why use video online?

3.12.1 Video is now a standard feature on many websites and increasingly the dominant medium for news and current affairs. With the launch of the BBC's iPlayer and similar technologies, the use of video online has attained a much higher level of general acceptance – allowing it to be utilised by local authorities as a significant way of reaching out to citizens.

3.12.2 The growing sophistication of web users, across all age groups, means that straightforward, direct and unedited content can be used effectively to get

simple messages across. In addition, studio produced edited content is now a much more affordable means of communicating more complex ideas.

3.12.3 However, in many cases raw production values, such as those often seen on sites like YouTube, provide an authentic, transparent medium allowing the speaker to deliver a direct message in a believable context. Democratic webcasting of formal, live content is now a well established and proven medium, with over 50 Local Authorities webcasting regularly and with many more using the technology for specific events.

3.12.4 The general acceptance of video on the web now means that the public sector can implement the use of video much more extensively to compliment their strategic communications.

The evolution of video on the web

3.12.5 There are several factors that should be considered in making video available on the web and they have all progress at different rates over time. During the last 10 years, all of these factors have progressed at such a rate to allow online video to be accessible to all.

The elements include:
- Hardware, including cameras and computers
- Software, for encoding and managing video
- Bandwidth, for delivery
- Web browser compatibility for video player types.

Webcasting democratic content

3.12.6 The benefits of delivering local authority content in video format were identified while the technology was still in an early stage of development – Public-i was launched (as UKCouncil Ltd) in May 2000 expressly for this purpose – and as the elements described above have developed, so has the potential for delivering high-quality video content to more and more citizens. The webcasting of democratic content delivers several benefits that it is not possible to exploit via any other medium other than video:

- Increasing engagement with citizens.
- Encouraging greater levels of public participation and interest in democratic processes.
- Effectively utilising technology in an informative and effective way.
- Increasing the profile of the authority.
- Increasing trust, transparency and accountability.

3.12.7 However, simply making a video stream available to view online does not reflect the most desirable way of delivering *democratic* content to viewers. Content such as formal meetings and events should be delivered to the citizen as a fully realised package, so that it is transparent and accessible to the viewer. This means that, in addition to the video, viewers should have access to:

- Details of speakers.
- The ability to interact with the authority.
- Access to any supporting information used in the webcast, such as documents, links and presentations.

3.12.8 Finally, research shows that viewers are unlikely to watch an entire meeting online, and are more likely to want to view a specific agenda item that they may be interested in. Therefore, it is important to have a clear indexing system that allows viewers to instantly select the part of the meeting that they wish to view. Again, this is not possible by simply making a video file available to stream or download from the internet.

Applications of webcasting for local authorities.

3.12.9 In addition to making formal meetings available to view online, there are a number of other applications for webcasting to be considered by councils, and the equipment configuration currently supplied to you puts B&HCC in a very advantageous position to implement these.

3.12.10 The R600 system that the council currently leases from as part of the contract with Public-i represents the perfect solution formal webcasting requirements – the portability of the system, along with the fixed cameras in both Brighton and Hove Town Halls' is the optimum configuration for webcasting democratic content from these locations.

3.12.11 In addition, providing an audio feed and hard-line internet connection is available, the R600 can be used in conjunction with the two mobile cameras to webcast from any location and used to webcast:

- Ward or parish meetings of interest
- Elections
- Mayor-making or other civic ceremonies
- Introducing a webcasting option to matrimonial, citizenship or similar services held in the Mayor's Parlour and the town Halls.

3.12.12 The council also has a Canon XM2 Camcorder, and a wireless audio package. This can be used to capture any content including:

- Briefings, either external or internal, by Politicians or Senior Officers/Executive
- Interviews with members of the public (Voxpops)
- Public information films
- In conjunction with other Public-i engagement solutions

Review of the Protocol

3.13 The success of the webcasting of meetings has led to questions being raised over the use of images from web casts on other e-media forums such as You-Tube and Facebook.

3.14   A review of the current protocol issued to Members has been undertaken and a revised protocol has been drawn up for approval and is detailed in appendix 2 to the report.

Way Forward

Following the success of the pilot project, the options open to the council are:

3.15   **Option 1** – To continue with the webcasting of Council, Cabinet, Planning Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meetings.

3.15.1 This option maintains the current provision and allows for other meetings such as one-off scrutiny reviews to be covered as well as the provision of video messages and other information. In discussing matters with Public-i, and having supported the pilot project they would like to re-new the contract for 21months. This would take the provision of web casting up to the end of March 2011.

3.15.2 The proposed 21-month contract would provide a degree of certainty for both the council and Public-i and allow for other functions to be tried such as video clips/messages outlining council priorities or seeking views on proposals.

3.15.3 The cost of renewing the public-i contract for a further 21 months would be £46,500.

3.15.4 There is also a staff resourcing issue in terms of having to co-ordinate each webcast, set up the equipment and manage the actual webcast at the time of the meeting. The impact on staff resources for the pilot project has been recognised and it is proposed that a full-time post should be established within Democratic Services to meet the requirements. As such the proposal is to fund an apprentice as a Democratic Services Assistant, as part of the council's apprenticeship programme. The post holder would be primarily responsible for ensuring the webcasting of the four main meetings, but would also gain experience as a DSA within the team.

3.16   **Option 2** – To cease webcasting.

3.16.1   Ceasing to webcast meetings would mean that the required funding would not need to be identified for future years. The negative impact being a loss of openness and transparency for the decision-making process and public engagement with the council.

3.16.2 In terms of general feedback to date, there has been a positive response from the public and figures for viewing both live and archived meetings are comparable with other leading authorities (see appendix 1).

Conclusion

3.17   The preferred option is Option 1 as this enables the continued provision of webcasting of meetings, which can be reviewed towards the end of the contract period and also enables further development of the resources and additional functionality such as specific messages and direct feedback on the council's web site. It also enables the council to engage directly with the public and thereby encompass the objectives of the Local Government, Economic Development and Construction Bill in terms of e-democracy.

4.   CONSULTATION

4.1   The Leaders Group have previously considered the proposal and supported the trial period to determine whether web casting would be a useful addition to the council's communication mechanisms with the residents of the city.

4.2   The Leaders Group has reviewed the pilot project and concluded that webcasting of the four meetings should be maintained and become a standard part of the council's provision and thereby have sufficient resources allocated to it.

5.   FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:
5.1   The agreed trial period together with the provision of cameras and associated equipment and installation works has cost £32k (£28,680 for web casting) and was met from one-off resources within the Strategy and Governance budget for 2007/08.

5.2   The cost to continue with the web casting of meetings with Public-i, amounts to £28,680k per annum based on the current 20hours per month for web casts. However, Public-i have offered a discount of over £5,000 for a 21-month contract which would amount to £46,500 to be paid in two instalments to account for each financial year.

5.3   The funding for 2009/10 at £20k (July 09 to March 10) would need to be met from the corporate contingency reserve, with the remaining £26,500k for 2010/11 to be met in the 2010 financial year. The corporate contingency was set at a level considered appropriate to cover the risks within the budget strategy and influenced by the Medium Term Financial Strategy; drawing against this reserve will place a higher risk on the balance of the reserve.

Finance officer consulted: Anne Silley   5 June 2009

Legal Implications:
5.4   There are no legal implications associated with the report and appropriate guidance to Members and officers in respect of those meetings being webcast has been issued.

Lawyer consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis   5 June 2008

Equalities Implications:

5.5 There are no equalities implications arising from the report; however the provision of webcasting does enable greater access to meetings and the decision-making process for those people who have internet facilities and are unable to attend the meetings.

Sustainability Implications:

5.6 There are no sustainability implications arising from the report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.7 There are no crime & disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.8 The provision of webcasting does enable an additional means of informing the electorate of the decisions being taken by the council; however the investment in necessary technology to maintain the service will need to be regularly evaluated against the actual use of the facility by the public.

5.9 With the webcasting of meetings, and in particular the Planning Committee, there is the possibility that recorded evidence will be used in appeal hearings and there is a degree of uncertainty about the level to which such evidence would be taken into account by the appeal hearing. This does place an importance on the knowledge and behaviour of Members at such meetings, to ensure that the decision-making process is not compromised and therefore open to challenge in this way.

5.10 The importance of training of Members is therefore something that needs to be addressed and a robust training programme put in place.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.11 There are no corporate or citywide implications arising from this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Analysis of webcasts
Appendix 2 – Revised Protocol
Appendix 3 - List of webcasting Authorities
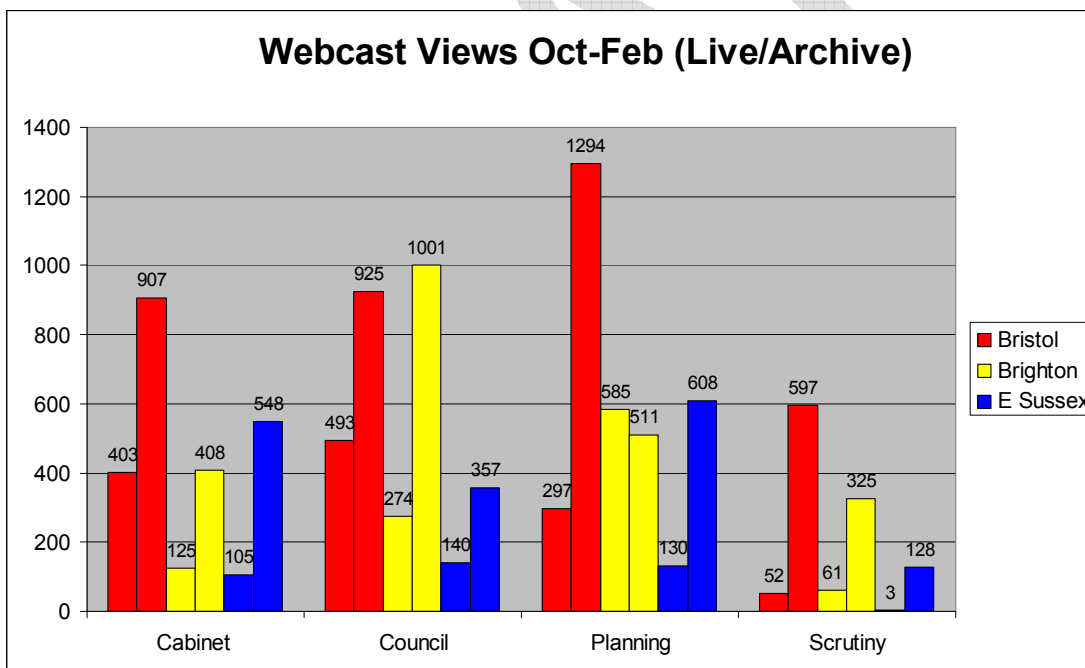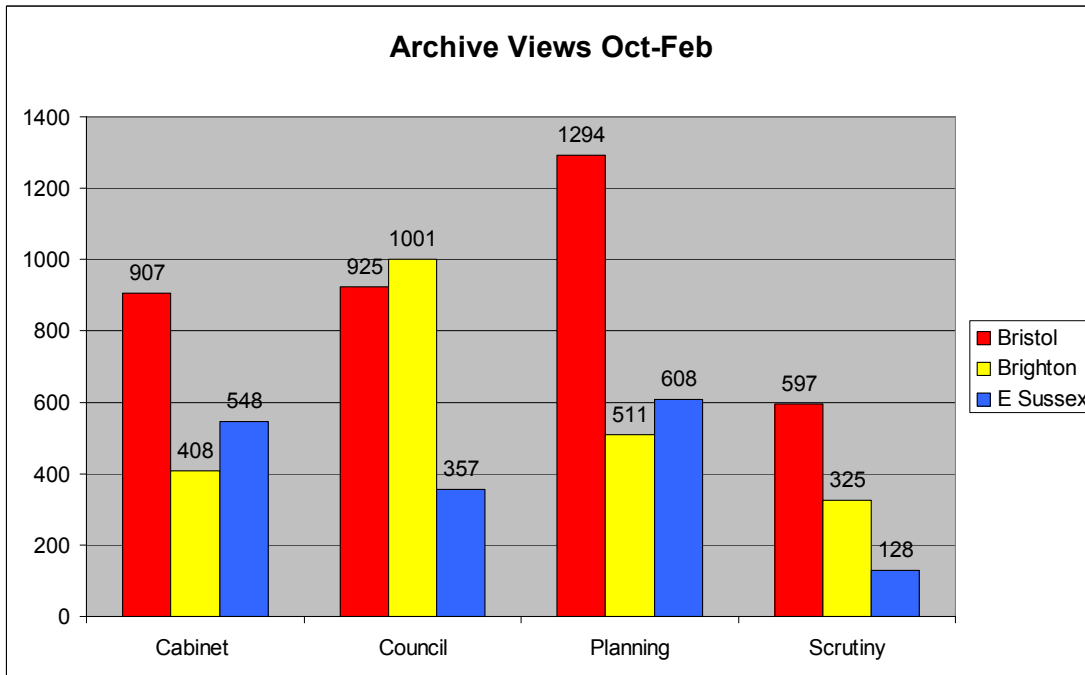Appendix 4 – Bristol City Council and East Sussex County Council case studies

Background Documents
None

Brighton & Hove Webcast Figures:

Month	Committee	Date	Live	Archive	Total
October	Council	09-Oct-08	127	492	622
	Cabinet	16-Oct-08	44	121	165
	Overview & Scrutiny	21-Oct-08	26	155	181
	Planning	22-Oct-08	15	5	20
			212	**773**	**985**
November	Planning	12-Nov-08	84	135	219
	Cabinet	20-Nov-08	41	129	170
			125	**264**	**389**
December	Overview & Scrutiny	02-Dec-08	10	114	124
	Planning	03-Dec-08	29	98	127
	Council	04-Dec-08	70	726	796
	Planning	12-Dec-08	199	359	558
	Cabinet	18-Dec-08	24	147	171
			332	**1444**	**1776**
January	Planning	14-Jan-09	54	157	211
	Cabinet	15-Jan-09	16	175	191
	Overview & Scrutiny	20-Jan-09	10	113	123
	Council	29-Jan-09	77	192	269
			157	**637**	**794**
February	Overview & Scrutiny	03-Feb-09	15	81	96
	Planning	04-Feb-09	288	147	435
	Cabinet	12-Feb-09	21	100	121
	Planning	25-Feb-09	35	12	47
	Council	26-Feb-09	60	75	135
			419	**415**	**834**
March	Overview & Scrutiny	03-Mar-09	9	61	70
	Overview & Scrutiny	10-Mar-09	15	110	125
	Cabinet	12-Mar-09	9	78	87
	Planning	18-Mar-09	28	80	108
	Council	19-Mar-09	46	109	155
			107	**438**	**545**
April	Planning	08-Apr-09	31	55	86
	Cabinet	23-Apr-09	32	31	63
	Planning	29-Apr-09	50	35	85
	Special Council	30-Apr-09	107	18	125
	Council	30-Apr-09	32	37	69
			252	**176**	**428**
May	Council	14-May-09	67	19	86
	Planning	20-May-09	25	27	52
	Cabinet	21-May-09	22	10	32
			114	**56**	**170**
Total			**1718**	**4203**	**5921**

Comparison with Bristol and East Sussex County Council

Archive Views Oct-Feb

Bristol — red, Brighton — yellow, E Sussex — blue

	Bristol	Brighton	E Sussex
Cabinet	907	408	548
Council	925	1001	357
Planning	1294	511	608
Scrutiny	597	325	128

Webcast Views Oct-Feb (Live/Archive)

Bristol — red, Brighton — yellow, E Sussex — blue

	Bristol		Brighton		E Sussex	
Cabinet	403	907	125	408	105	548
Council	493	925	274	1001	140	357
Planning	297	1294	585	511	130	608
Scrutiny	52	597	61	325	3	128

Revised Webcasting Protocol

1.0   Agenda Front Sheets and Signage at Meetings

1.1   Advanced notice of the intention to web cast a meeting will be given on each agenda with the inclusion of the following:

"WEBCASTING NOTICE

This meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's web site. At the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1988. Data collected during this web cast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy (*Guidance for Employees' on the BHCC website).*

Therefore by entering the meeting room and using the seats around the meeting tables, you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for the purpose of web casting and/or Member training. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the public gallery area.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Head of Democratic Services or the designated Democratic Services Officer listed on the agenda."

1.2   In addition signs will be displayed inside and outside the meeting room (see overleaf).

2.0   Conduct of meetings

2.1   At the start of each meeting to be filmed, an announcement will be made to the effect that the meeting is being web cast, and that the Chairman may also terminate or suspend the web casting of the meeting, in accordance with this protocol. This will be confirmed by the Chairman making the following statement:-

"I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet and will be capable of repeated viewing."

3.0   Termination or suspension of web cast

3.1   The Chairman of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend the web cast if, in his/her opinion, continuing to web cast would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting.

This would include:

(i)   Public disturbance or other suspension of the meeting;
(ii)   Exclusion of public and press being moved and supported;
(iii) Any other reason moved and seconded and supported by the Committee.

3.2   No exempt or confidential agenda items shall be webcast.

4.0   Access to Webcasts

4.1   Subject to paragraph 4.2 below all archived webcasts will be available to view on the Council's website for a period of six months. Meetings are recorded onto DVD, which will be stored in accordance with records management procedures.

4.2   Archived webcasts or parts of web casts shall only be removed from the Council's website if the Monitoring Officer considers that it is necessary because all or part of the content of the webcast is or is likely to be in breach of any statutory provision or common law doctrine, for example Data Protection and Human Rights legislation or provisions relating to confidential or exempt information.

4.3   If the Monitoring Officer has decided to take such action he must notify all elected Members in writing as soon as possible of his decision and the reasons for it.

4.4   The Council expects the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer to ensure that all meetings are conducted lawfully. Therefore, the Council anticipates that the need to exercise the power set out above will occur only exceptionally.

4.5   The actual webcasts and archived material, and copyright therein, remain the property of the Council, and the right to copy, issue, rent, perform, communicate or adapt any of the webcast or archived material is restricted as follows:

(i)   Any Member wishing to use a web cast or part thereof on their individual council web pages may do so as long as the whole agenda item is displayed; however, should they wish to post any material onto externally based media such as You-tube or Facebook, prior written approval must be obtained from the Head of Democratic Services;

(ii)   The use of a webcast or part thereof by any person who is not an officer or Member of the council is prohibited without the prior written approval of the Head of Democratic Services;

(iii)   A DVD copy of a webcast can be obtained for a fee of £75 from Democratic Services and shall not be altered in any way or played in public.

4.6   Any elected Member who is concerned about any webcast should raise their concerns with the Head of Democratic Services or the Monitoring Officer.

5.0   Review & Monitoring

5.1   Operation of the webcasting will be monitored and reviewed from time to time and reported to the Governance Committee.

<u>WEBCASTING</u>

PLEASE NOTE THAT BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL MAY BROADCAST THIS MEETING LIVE ON ITS WEBSITE AND THE RECORD ARCHIVED FOR FUTURE VIEWING

YOUR PICTURE MAY BE INCLUDED IN THE BROADCAST / RECORD ACCESSIBLE AT

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/yourcouncil/webcasts/default.htm

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

MARK WALL, HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (01273 291006 e-mail mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk

List of webcasting authorities   Appendix 3:

Aylesbury Vale District Council	New Forest District Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Newcastle City Council
Braintree District Council	North East Derbyshire District Council
Brentwood Borough Council	Pembrokeshire County Council
Brighton & Hove City Council	RMT
Bristol City Council	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
British Medical Association	Royal College of Physicians Ireland
Buckinghamshire County Council	South Holland District Council
Cardiff City & County	South Oxfordshire District Council
Castle Point District Council	South Yorkshire Joint Authority
Cherwell District Council	St Albans City & District Council
Council of the Isles of Scilly	Staffordshire County Council
Devon & Cornwall Police Authority	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Devon County Council	Stroud District Council
Donegal County Council	The Hemming Group
Dublin City Council	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Council	Waverley Borough Council
East Sussex County Council	West Lindsey District Council
Epping Forest District Council	West Sussex County Council
Essex County Council	Wicklow County Council
Hertsmere Borough Council	Worcestershire County Council
Kent County Council	London Borough of Camden
Kingston upon Hull City Council	London Borough of Croydon
Lancashire County Council	London Borough of Haringey
Leicester City Council	London Borough of Hounslow
Lincolnshire County Council	Mole Valley District Council
Local Government Association	Moray Council

Case Study 1: Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council has a proven track record of using new technology to broaden democratic engagement.

BCC webcast Full Council, Cabinet, Planning, Development Control and Select Committee webcasts, and in addition to this regularly film and then webcast special events, such as *Revisiting the Role of Bristol Schools in their Communities,* and *Launch of South Bristol Digital Neighbourhoods.*

In conjunction with Public-i, Bristol CC are also pioneering other methods of engagement, such as e-petitioning and online discussion forums, via a dedicated website, designed and developed by Public-i – www.askbristol.com

AskBristol is unique in that it engages members of the public in a number of different ways, but then ties these together to form a complete picture. For example, a member of the public may feel strongly enough about an issue to go online to AskBristol to sign a petition; they can then discuss the issue online with other users, and ultimately see the issue discussed live in council via a webcast.

Not only does this approach reflect a comprehensive and popular service, but by following the example route, traffic can be driven to the webcasting section via other methods. This can result in some enviable viewing statistics:

	Activity Type	Title	Live date	Activity	Live	Archive	Category
	Webcast	Full Council - Budget meeting	24 Feb 2009	**1796**	223	1544	Full Council
	Webcast	What does my body need me for? - Daniel C. Dennett	20 Mar 2009	**1464**	581	855	Other
	Webcast	E-Democracy Day - Modern methods of governance - democracy in action or mob rule?	31 Oct 2007	**591**	0	565	Other
	Webcast	State of the City debate 2008 and Full Council	02 Dec 2008	**573**	0	571	Full Council
	Webcast	Full Council (Extraordinary meeting)	10 Feb 2009	**545**	170	374	Full Council
	Webcast	Next Generation Roadshow - High speed broadband in your community	31 Mar 2009	**502**	221	272	Conference

As discussed, it is not unrealistic to state that with a concerted online engagement strategy and appropriate marketing, such viewing figures are easily obtainable by B&HCC and could be exceeded, marking the council as progressive, innovative and open.

Testimonial

Philip Higgins, Corporate Consultation Manager, and Cllr Terry Cook from Bristol City Council have compiled a number of reports to ascertain the success of their webcasting project, and have discovered the following, via an ongoing evaluation by survey:

82% of users agree – "Webcasting is making the council more open and accountable for its actions"

59% of users agree – "I better understand the work of the council and councillors after watching a webcast"

And from members of the Bristol public:

**"A huge step forward for open local democracy in Bristol"** – Female, 47 years

"Really good idea and good effort" – Male, 29 years

Case study 2: East Sussex County Council

ESCC have been a webcasting client for many years, and are a good example of an established, regularly webcasting authority that has embedded the service in the consciousness of their citizens. In addition, they have established a partnership with local press to further expand the profile of their service.

ESCC have a fixed (F600) system in their council chamber, and webcast Full Council, Cabinet, Planning Committee and Health Overview & Scrutiny meetings. In addition, they have formed a partnership with Sussex Police Authority, who webcast their main monthly meeting from the chamber, and also the online counterpart to *The Argus* newspaper:
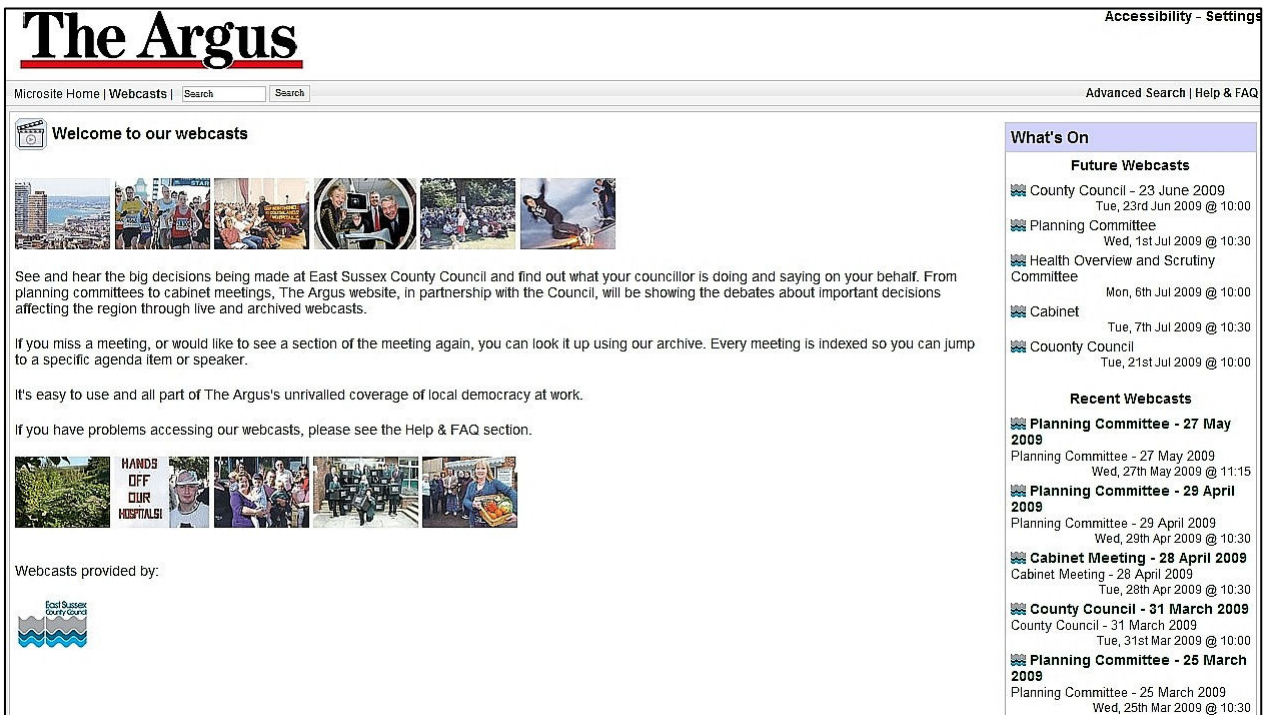
This partnership has generated the following additional viewings to their webcasts, since January 2009, at no cost to the authority:

Total visitor sessions	2753
Total unique visitor addresses	466

In addition to the presence of the dedicated The Argus microsite, the partnership also provides editorial references in the body of the paper version, where relevant to a particular story – driving even more traffic to the webcasts and further raising the profile of the service. B&HCC can utilise this approach to generate higher awareness.

Case Study 3: Epping Forest District Council

EFDC are a good example of a webcasting authority that uses their equipment to its fullest potential, to create a highly varied and interesting library of content for their citizens. Similarly to B&HCC, they have fixed cameras in the chamber which they use in conjunction with an R600 mobile unit, which they regularly use to capture 'off-site' meetings, such as planning.
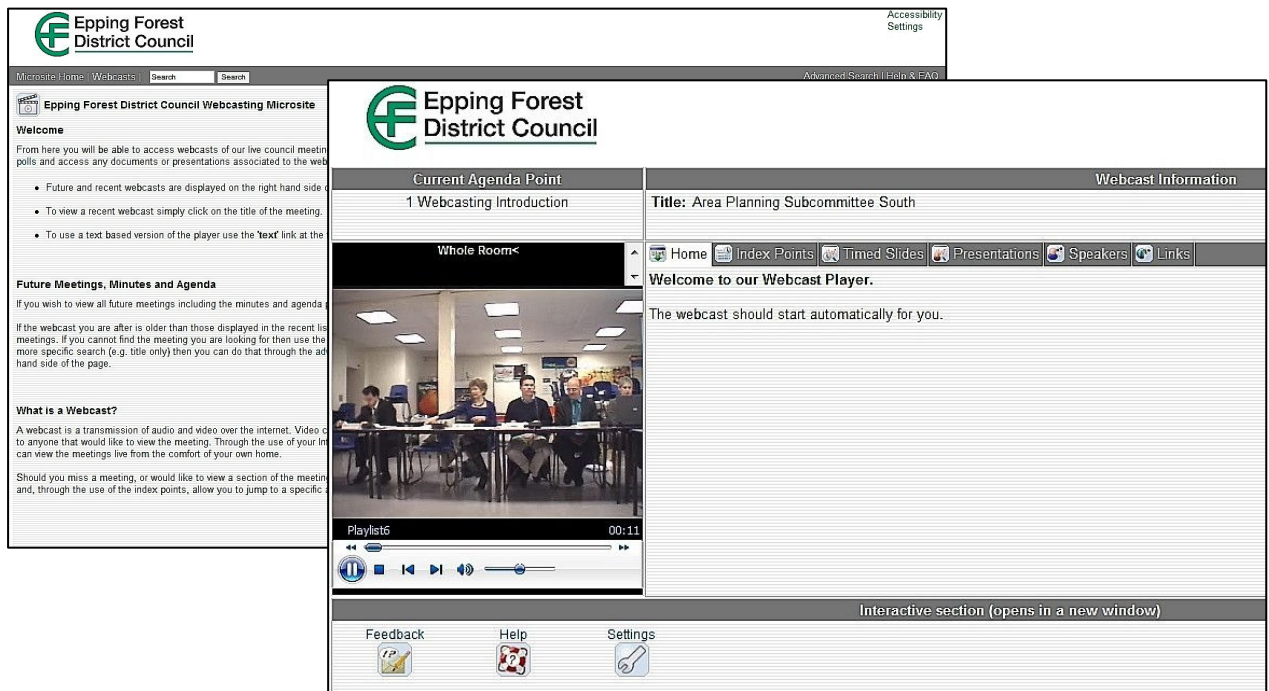
Content produced and webcast from their chamber includes Full Council, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny. They also use the mobile aspect of their equipment to capture area meetings – such as Area Planning meetings, District Development Control Committees, etc.

In addition, EFDC make good use of the tagging features included within the webcasting software, which not only ensures that their citizens can quickly and easily get to the content that they are interested in, it also makes their content ready to be 'set free' in the online environment, which is very much the next step in the evolution of democratic webcasting and engagement.

Promotion of the webcasting service, attention to detail such as this, and passionate staff who believe strongly in that online engagement is key to a local authority's communication strategy has again resulted in impressive viewing figures:

	Activity Type	Title	Live date	Activity	Live	Archive	Category
	Webcast	Cabinet	06 Oct 2008	**1296**	54	1221	Cabinet
	Webcast	Council	28 Oct 2008	**1097**	230	864	Full Council
	Webcast	Christmas and New Year Message 2008	17 Dec 2008	**634**	0	620	Your Council
	Webcast	Civic Awards 2008	19 Mar 2008	**509**	0	500	Other
	Webcast	James Akawsaw Gronniosaw - an African Prince	14 Jan 2008	**503**	0	493	Other
	Webcast	Olympic Flag Raising Ceremony	26 Aug 2008	**502**	0	463	Other
	Webcast	Cabinet	14 Jul 2008	**443**	9	422	Cabinet
	Webcast	Council	25 Sep 2008	**438**	12	424	Full Council
	Webcast	Essex Scrutiny Conference	22 Oct 2008	**339**	0	339	Scrutiny

Testimonials

"Staffordshire Moorlands District Council has been webcasting meetings 'live' since September 2007. During that time, over 10,000 people have tuned in to view meetings – an impressive figure, and a great tribute to the people of the area who have taken the opportunity to see what their elected representatives have been discussing and the decisions they have been making. This has resulted in a significant increase in interest throughout the district with regard to meetings and the Council as a whole.

A key benefit of webcasting to the Authority, as well as increasing interest in meetings, has been that the reporting of meetings has become far more accurate and coverage in the local press has been extremely favourable. In addition, officers and Members have found that they can save valuable time finding information and cross-checking minutes by viewing meetings again online. Feedback from the public – evidenced by calls into the local radio station, letters to the local papers and correspondence directly to the Council – has largely been positive, with citizens commending the Council for being open enough to allow their meetings to be shown live and over the Internet.

Finally, in a period of financial pressure, webcasting and other multimedia tools offer the prospect for the Council of identifying efficiency savings. These have come through savings in travel costs (less people need to attend

meetings in person); the use of paper-based information systems (there is no longer the need to send out agendas to as many people or to even print agendas in some cases, as they are all available electronically); postage costs; and savings on staff costs. These are important points for a Council which is constantly striving to find efficiency savings in all areas of the business."

 - Mark Bailey, Policy Manager (Staffordshire Moorlands DC)

Further testimonials

"This is long awaited. It enables those who wish to see and hear what the authority has to say, rather than through pages of text."

"This is fantastic!!! It did cheer me up no end! It is more personal and everyone wanted to see it so it's an excellent communication method".

"Brilliant system. Very easy to jump to what I want".

"I have managed to find my way round your system and find it v impressive. As a School Governor we are interested in using this technology for our schools".

 - OFFICERS, CAMBS COUNTY COUNCIL

"I think it's been very good for showing the smoke and mirrors side of councils because I didn't know what to expect before I became a councillor a couple of years ago and certainly it's a lot more democratic and transparent than you are always led to believe."

 - UK COUNCILLOR

 "By watching the webcast citizens are for the first time getting an idea of how decisions are being made and not just being told the results"

"Thank you for the webcasts; they are very interesting & a great resource for people to be able to see during working hours. This is a good way to become more accountable."

 - UK CITIZENS

You do a public meeting and the public ought to know. So I'm all for it, the more I see of this the better I think it is for democracy."

 - UK COUNCILLOR

"This is an opportunity to show the public that what we do is not only worthwhile but also effective and to see democracy at work. It is open house. The problem is that in the past decisions were made behind close doors. This is changing. The more openness the better. This means more accountability as politicians can no longer say one thing when canvassing and do another in the chamber. Now citizen can verify if they keep their promise.

 - COUNCILLOR, FINGAL