

**Review of Audio Recording of Broads Authority Meetings**  
Report by Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

<b>Summary:</b>	This report reviews the trial of the audio recording of Broads Authority meetings and considers whether it should be continued on a permanent basis.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) That the use of audio recording of meetings be continued by the Authority and copies provided to the public on request.</li><li>(ii) That the recordings are destroyed two years after the date of the meeting.</li></ul>

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 27 January 2017 the Broads Authority resolved to record its meetings and committee meetings on a trial basis and investigate video recording.
- 1.2 Members are asked to review this trial practice and the information on video recording and decide whether the audio recordings should continue.

## **2 Review**

- 2.1 Over the past 12 months the Broads Authority has audio-recorded its meetings and committee meetings, with the exception of confidential items. The Authority's minutes remain the formal record of meetings.
- 2.2 The recording has been undertaken on an inexpensive portable digital device which has been found to provide sufficient sound clarity. At each meeting the Chair has advised those present that recordings are taking place. There are signs in the room and outside which inform that recording is taking place. There is an announcement that the copyright in the recordings belongs to the Broads Authority.
- 2.3 The Authority's Standing Orders were amended in May 2017 to reflect the practice of recording.
- 2.4 In effect, the recordings are of those parts of the meeting to which members of the public are entitled to be present and consist of a single unbroken recording file. The recording of confidential items has not taken place due to more complex considerations of data law, employment law and overall

confidentiality of third party information and necessary consents which affect such discussions.

- 2.5 The recordings are retained by the Authority and are available on request being made to the Monitoring Officer. No members of the public (i.e. individuals with no connection to the Authority) have requested an audio recording.
- 2.6 Officers in the governance team have found the retention of audio recordings of appreciable benefit in finalising minutes and dealing with any matters of uncertainty. It has resulted in greater confidence in the accuracy of the minutes both by officers and Members and the number of communications over the content of the minutes has in fact reduced.
- 2.7 No trial has taken place of making recordings available on the web site. Each file recording is in the region of 16 to 164 megabytes (MB) of data. On average this is 100MB of data. The maximum storage on the Authority's web site is 20 MB, which means that third party storage would be required, linked from the web site. Basic presentational requirements would suggest an index based on the agenda and breaks in recording, which would have a cost in IT resources.
- 2.8 The provisional view is that the very limited demand for recordings is quite easily dealt with by providing a cd recording when asked; the files are too large to send out by e-mail, although it has been possible when specific agenda items have been requested.
- 2.9 The recordings have all been kept to date. Data processing law dictates that these should not be kept longer than necessary. It is proposed that recordings are marked for deletion by the Monitoring Officer after two years from the date of each meeting, unless a reason is required for longer-term retention in an individual case.

### **3 Webcasting**

- 3.1 During the past year the Authority's officers have met with a video-streaming provider to explore the possibility of live streaming of its meetings. In addition there was a presentation partly on this by the Democratic Services Manager of Brecon Beacons NPA in May 2017. Whilst it would not be appropriate to set out the precise cost details of the webcasting, for commercial confidentiality reasons, it is clear that the set-up costs and hardware would exceed £15,000, with an annual payment of a 5-figure sum for the hosting and streaming and archive service ongoing.
- 3.2 Although clearly a desirable long-term objective, the cost of video streaming is such that at present it cannot be recommended for adoption in the short term.

## **4 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The use of audio recordings has achieved the specific purpose for which it was trialled, which is improving the accuracy of minutes and resolving any disputes arising.
- 4.2 It cannot fairly be said that this step has greatly improved public access to the business of the Authority, but other options would have more significant resource implications and require the support of Members if they are to be taken further. The availability of recordings is in itself a powerful message about transparency.
- 4.3 It is recommended that the audio recording of meetings be confirmed on an ongoing basis and copies made available to the public on request and that the process of destruction in 2.9 above is adopted.

Background Papers:	Nil
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Broads Plan Objectives:	None
Appendices:	None