

**Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Hearings - Webcasting**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Licensing Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Ryan O'Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager  Oliviya Parfitt, Democratic Services Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

To provide the information required for the Committee's consideration of whether to webcast Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Meetings.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That all Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Hearings, where open to the public, be webcast.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Licensing Committee	17 March 2022

# Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Hearings - Webcasting

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of public engagement.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>We do not expect the recommendation will materially affect achievement of cross-cutting objectives. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of public engagement.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Risk Management</b>	See Section 5 of the report.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Financial</b>	No impact identified.	Senior Finance Manager, Finance Team

<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Legal</b>	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out in the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005. There are no direct consequences arising from the recommendation that would adversely affect an individual's rights and freedoms as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	No impact identified.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	No impact identified.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	No impact identified.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No impact identified.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Procurement</b>	No impact identified.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	Continuing online meetings would reduce transport and indirect carbon produced from transport used to attend meeting.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manger

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During the Covid-19 pandemic, where virtual meetings were permitted, all Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings (that were open to the public) were webcast live and recorded for playback. This included meetings of the Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee (the Sub-Committee).
- 2.2 Webcasting the Sub-Committee's meetings during that time increased the level of public engagement with the process. Whilst only parties relevant to the matter being considered by the Sub-Committee can formally engage with the meeting, these are still open to the public should they wish to attend in person to watch the proceedings.

- 2.3 Following the return to in-person meetings after May 2022, an operational decision was made, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, to continue with the pre-pandemic arrangement of in-person attendance only at Sub-Committee meetings. It is important to note that whilst beneficial, webcasting meetings of the Council is not a legal requirement. There are also times where, inevitably, technical problems arise that prevent a meeting from being webcast fully.
- 2.4 The decision outlined above was considered against the nature of Sub-Committee hearings, whereby the issue considered is specific in nature, with only those members of the public required for the Hearing permitted to take part. There had not previously been the demand for these meetings to be webcast.
- 2.5 However, several queries have been received since May 2022 as to why the Sub-Committee's meetings have not been webcast, particularly when the issue being considered is of local public interest.
- 2.6 Webcasting the Sub-Committee meetings would provide the flexibility for individuals to view the proceedings live or retrospectively. This also provides an alternative option for those unable to attend meetings during the working day and for those who feel unable to attend in person, which is particularly significant following the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Option 1 – Agree that Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Meetings be webcast live, where open to the public. This is the preferred option as it will increase transparency and allow more individuals to watch the proceedings and decisions made. It could limit the number of individuals in attendance should there be a resurgence of Covid-19 or increase in flu, for example.
- 3.2 Option 2 – Do Nothing. Members of the public would still be able to attend and watch the proceedings in-person.
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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 See point 3.1 above.
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### **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The main risk would concern the total or partial failure of the webcasting equipment however this is a consideration for all meetings webcast.

## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 There has not been any consultation prior to the Committee's consideration of the report. However, there have been several public enquiries into the webcasting of Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Meetings.
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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 If agreed, future Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee Meetings will be webcast live and recorded for playback, where open to the public (Part I).
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Additional facilities provided across other Kent Authorities.
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.