

APPENDIX A

Consultation questions.

<i>Question 1 - Do you agree the duty to broadcast meetings live should be extended to additional meetings of a principal council?</i>

<p>The Council welcomes the principle of democratic transparency and the attempt to widen public access to the work of local government and as a means of strengthening public accountability. However, there are a number of practical and financial issues that must be considered before implementing any new duty.</p>
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<p>The Council is concerned that the new duty could result in significant financial pressures, particularly for broadcasting equipment, video storage and staffing resources. It would be appropriate for the Welsh Government to provide specific ongoing funding to support the extended duty.</p>
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<p>Given the current requirement to webcast the meetings of the Full Council, it is recommended that this is identified as Phase 1 of the journey. It is suggested that consideration should be given to extending the legal requirement to include meetings of the highest public interest in Phase 2, specifically the Cabinet, Planning Committees and Scrutiny Committees. It should then be extended to Phase 3 to include the Democracy Services, Governance and Audit, Licensing and Standards Committees, as a step in the future.</p>
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<p>There are specific resource implications in extending the provision further, particularly as current technology for webcasting is on very weak footing. It is noted that there is no standard system for webcasting committee meetings in Wales, with each authority having developed their own systems individually in order to webcast and hold hybrid meetings. There is no standard system for webcasting virtual meetings in Wales either. Due to the fragile position across the country, it is noted that a standard flexible technical solution is required for the whole of Wales, lead by the government of Wales, in order for all authorities and corporate joint committees to benefit easily from the the technology.</p>
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<i>Question 2 - Are there other committees' meetings of a principal council you think the duty should be extended?</i>

<p>See the last paragraph of the response to question 1.</p>
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<i>Question 3 - Do you agree the requirement to broadcast meetings should be extended to National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities?</i>
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<p>The principle of ensuring transparency to the public applies equally to those bodies as it does to local authorities. It is recommended that these authorities commence their broadcasting arrangements as part of the extension referred to as 'phase 2' in Cyngor Gwynedd's response to question 1 above.</p>
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Question 4 - Should the broadcasting of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authority meetings be extended to meetings beyond that of the full authority, e.g. standards committees?

It is a matter for the relevant authorities to provide guidance in their responses, however the principle of transparency is crucial.

Question 5 - In relation to principal councils, NPAs and FRAs, do you agree that recordings of meetings required to be broadcast should be retained?

A specific retention period should be identified for keeping recordings of meetings that must be broadcast, such as 6 or 12 months. It should be noted that the formal record of the committee is the written minutes of the meeting and not a recording of the webcast.

In addition, consideration should be given to the cost for retaining the recordings, as they are large digital files.

Question 6 - What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of extending the duty to broadcast meetings on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any possible impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language and not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English. Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects? Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

For Wales as a whole, the impact of extending the duty to broadcast council committees will have a positive impact on the Welsh language, with the language being heard in live discussions in Local Authorities. It would be necessary for legislation to clearly state that all committees are expected to be broadcast in Welsh and English, and not solely the Full Council meeting.

In Cyngor Gwynedd, extending the requirements would have a positive impact on the Welsh language. As all committees are already held through the medium of Welsh, broadcasting them would ensure that the Welsh language is heard more frequently online. We ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English.

Please note that the arrangement of holding meetings through the medium of Welsh language is the DEFAULT arrangement in Gwynedd. No one has to submit a request in advance to speak Welsh. The requirement for all Local Authorities to provide simultaneous translation by default for all meetings, and a duty for Chairs to encourage speakers to contribute in Welsh would promote the Welsh language and mitigate any negative impacts.

If Welsh speakers have to submit a request to speak Welsh in a meeting, the Welsh language is therefore treated less favourably.

Question 7 - In your opinion, could extending the duty to broadcast meetings be formulated or changed so as to: • have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less

favourably than English; or • mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

See the above answer regarding the default position to be able to contribute in Welsh at meetings. This would offer more opportunities for people to listen to the Welsh language live in committees or listen to a recording afterwards. This in turn will support the development and provision of Artificial Intelligence in Welsh. However, it must also be ensured that there are enough officers who have the right language skills to ensure accuracy and quality in the use of artificial intelligence.

Some authorities are also using or considering using subtitles in webcasting – it should be ensured that Welsh subtitles are available as a matter of equality for all.

Question 8 - Please explain how you think broadcasting of council meetings impacts different social, economic and cultural groups, both positively and negatively and what measures can be undertaken to ensure equitable access and representation

In general, broadcasting more Council meetings has a positive impact on different social, economic and cultural groups while also reducing inequality. Ensuring open democracy for all is an important principle that should be respected.

However, webcasting does not answer everyone's needs. It must be emphasised that there are some people in deprived and rural areas who do not have access to adequate web provision, or who lack access to equipment to watch webcasts. Not everyone is going to find it easy to listen via a computer, and viewing a screen is going to be difficult for some people.

Question 9 We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Please note that there is no reference in the consultation to the need to broadcast meetings of Joint Corporate Committees.

It is considered that the Welsh Government should provide specific guidance on this, together with a budget for delivering this important element.