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Mr Richard Taylor
By email: rt@cantab.net

Chief Executive

22 November 2010

Dear Mr Taylor

Filming at Council meetings

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the investigation of the complaint about filming at North Area Committee and the issues associated with this.

Given the Independent Complaints Investigator's conclusions, I am lifting the current restrictions against you filming, which were put in place while we considered the complaint. This means you will be able to submit requests to film individual meetings as before. As I pointed out at Civic Affairs Committee, the protocol deals with how the council will treat requests to film and it does not give an unconditional right to film any meeting. Any request, whether by you or anyone else, will be agreed, or not, at the discretion of the chair on its merit and in the context of that particular meeting. There may be a number of reasons why the chair may decide you cannot film all or part of any meeting. The chair also has the discretion to decide where any camera can be sited and any restrictions on camera angles etc.

Background to the complaint

The complaint focused on what happened at a meeting of the committee and the complainant expressed concern that the council had given permission to you as a private individual to film the meeting. They complained that your status was not made clear to those who were there at the meeting. They were concerned that because you were a private individual, as opposed to an accredited media organisation, there were greater threats to the privacy of individuals who were recorded by you at council meetings and less control over what happened to content.

I thought it was appropriate to restrict your rights to film while we investigated the issues because the complaint was specifically about you filming and because the council has a duty to consider both sides of the issue. I need to balance your desire to have access to film meetings with the desire of others who wish to ensure the council is respecting their privacy.

Cambridge City Council
Guildhall, Cambridge CB2 3QJ



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

From your comments at Civic Affairs Committee it would seem that you believe that someone wishing to speak in a public meeting should also be happy to be filmed. It is clear from this complaint that other people believe there is a distinction between attending or speaking at a meeting and having that attendance or contribution available on the world wide web. There is also concern that if anyone can film meetings, the individual's comments may be edited and misrepresented and if this occurs they will not be able to seek redress easily.

The Independent Complaints Investigator's conclusions

The Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI) was asked to look at the issues raised by the complaint. The ICI's report considers these issues and makes a number of wider observations and specific recommendations. I attach a copy of the report for your information. Your name has been redacted as it will be made available as a public document, given the public interest around this issue.

The report mentions that the minutes of the 30 September North Area Committee meeting state that, "*The Chair gave permission for Mr Richard Taylor to film the meeting. It was confirmed with Mr Taylor that the filming would take place from a fixed position and cease if members of the public or speakers expressed a desire not to be filmed.*"

The report makes it clear that although some controls were in place, there was a lack of clarity over whether everyone speaking in the meeting (particularly those arriving after the start) was fully aware of the filming or its potential end use. It goes on to state, "*The Chairman seems to have taken reasonable control of Mr Taylor's filming. He did not allow the camera to pan and the video shows that Mr Taylor abided by this instruction.*"

The ICI has made some specific recommendations about how we can improve current practice within the existing protocol. In particular ensuring:

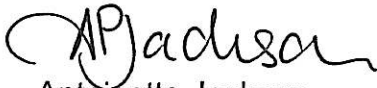
- there is sufficiently clear notice at the entrance to the meeting about filming;
- the Chair is consistent in asking all present, and any latecomers, if they have seen and understood the notice; and
- the Chair suspends filming while someone who has opted out of being filmed is speaking.

We will be seeking to implement these recommendations immediately.

The report also recommends the council considers a broader range of issues around filming in order to ensure we are balancing the desire for transparency with the need to protect the privacy and data rights of individuals, not least to ensure members of the public feel safe and confident in taking part in full and open discussions of issues of concern at council meetings.

I think these issues need to be considered more fully in a report that will be submitted to Civic Affairs at its next meeting in February. This will include costed options on the possibility of the council filming its own meetings, as well as more fully considering the practical, technical and legal aspects of allowing filming at meetings; and whether there are further changes that can be made to the current protocol in order to clarify or strengthen it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'AJackson', written in black ink.

Antoinette Jackson
Chief Executive

Enclosure