

22 January 2024

Official Information Request No. 8140012932
(Please quote this in any correspondence)

George Morrison
By email – fyi-request-24998-5b823cfe@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe George

Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987

Re: Maurice Williamson recording

I refer to your email, which we received on 2 December 2023, requesting information about the Auckland Council Planning, Environment and Parks Committee meeting of 30 November 2023.

Your specific request and our response are below.

Under the OIA please provide me with the full footage and audio of Cr Williamson that was removed from the recording of the meeting referred to in this story

<https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/301019145/auckland-councillor-criticised-for-vile-comment-about-wellington-mayor>

The council is required by clause 28, schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002 to keep minutes of its meetings. Although it is not required to make recordings of its meetings publicly available, the council livestreams its committee meetings and makes copies of its recordings available online. As your email notes, part of the Planning, Environment and Parks Committee (PEP Committee) meeting of 30 November 2023 broadcast via the livestream is not now available online. This is because this portion of the meeting contained inappropriate and offensive content and did not relate to the business of the meeting. Your request for this portion of the meeting is withheld in reliance on the following LGOIMA sections:

- 7(2)(a) to protect the privacy of individuals and
- 7(2)(f)(ii) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of such members, officers, employees, and persons from improper pressure or harassment.

In making this decision we have considered whether Council's interest in withholding this information is outweighed by other considerations, which would render it desirable in the public interest to make this information available. We acknowledge that there is some public interest in understanding how the Council manages such incidents, but we consider that this public interest can be met through the provision of a summary. A summary is provided below:

Summary of the removed section of the Planning, Environment and Parks Committee (PEP Committee) meeting of 30 November 2023 –

The PEP Committee was in session. Councillor Williamson who was attending the meeting remotely was heard making an offensive comment about Wellington Mayor Tory Whanau.

The comment is clear on the video recording but was less clear in the meeting room, due to others speaking and noise coming from the public gallery. It appears that Cr Williamson made the comment to someone outside the meeting, and he was unaware that his device was not muted and that he was audible to the meeting. After making the comment, Cr Williamson was placed on mute by the Governance Advisor present at the meeting.

Elected representatives immediately raised concerns about the comment, including a point of order for a sanction and a referral to the Chief Executive (CE)

There were further points of order made during the meeting. The meeting chair ruled that Councillor Williamson should withdraw his remarks and apologise. Cr Williamson was not heard during these exchanges but later heard saying he was not aware his microphone was on and apologised multiple times for whatever was heard through his audio. He confirmed he was at an external facility and was managing technology. There were further exchanges of comments from Councillors, including further calls to apologise from Cr Fairey and Member Henare.

Cr Hills concluded discussion on the issue by asking elected members to stop exchanges on the matter and informing them that the matter would be investigated, noting Cr Williamson had apologised but the requests of councillors would result in a review with Chief Executive.

The initial investigation into this matter has concluded.

The decision by Auckland Council to release the information contained in this response was made by Rose Leonard, Manager Governance Services.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you have any questions please contact me on 09 301 0101, quoting Official Information Request No. 8140012932.

Ngā mihi



Sarah Parry-Crooke
Senior Privacy & Official Information Business Partner
Governance Services