# Wymondham Town Council halts live streaming amid claims of press hostility and internal turmoil



Wymondham Town Council has ignited controversy with its recent decision to cease live broadcasts of its meetings on YouTube, attributing this move to what they term "continuous negative coverage" from a local magazine. This marks another example of a council seemingly unwilling to face the scrutiny that comes with public office, especially as it struggles with accountability amidst a shifting political landscape.

Just last year, the council adopted a questionable 'red card' system, which allows councillors to exit meetings if their anxiety peaks—a measure that raises eyebrows about their ability to withstand democratic debate. The decision to halt live-streaming appears to be a reaction to a satirical piece published in the Wymondham Magazine, causing what some council members claim to be distress. However, critics argue that if they truly stand by their decisions, they should welcome transparency and the opportunity for public scrutiny.

For over two years, Wymondham Town Council had made strides towards accessibility by streaming its meetings, backed by a £3,000 investment in equipment. Yet in a private meeting last month, councillors voted for a temporary four-month halt to broadcasts, signalling an apparent retreat from public engagement. Their claim that negative coverage has harmed the "health and wellbeing" of members reeks of defensiveness and could suggest an inability to cope with dissent.

Even with the livestreaming paused, the public retains the right to record or broadcast meetings. Local journalist Jimmy Young remarked, “If they're proud of what they're doing, they wouldn't be afraid of live streaming or reporting in the media. People will see this and wonder what they're trying to hide.” This reluctance to embrace scrutiny only deepens doubts about the council's integrity.

Simultaneously, the council has advertised for a 'community engagement officer' with a salary of up to £33,000 per annum, tasked with "promoting a positive image." This appears more akin to a PR strategy than genuine community engagement, echoing the ineffectual attempts of other councils struggling with transparency.

The previously introduced 'red card' system, instigated by Green Councillor Joe Barrett following an alleged "psychiatric emergency," also raises concerns. Rather than fostering openness, this system may reflect an increasingly bizarre approach to governance that diverges from addressing the real issues facing Wymondham. Barrett has since resigned amid controversy over backlash he faced from critics like Tony Holden, who championed transparency by initiating livestreaming. Holden has aptly described the council's current state as "chaos," calling into question their ability to handle criticism effectively.

In a climate where public trust is essential, the council's retreat from transparency, combined with its internal turmoil, underscores the pressing need for accountable governance. Elected representatives must navigate not just public perception but also their own reluctance to face the issues head-on, revealing a troubling detachment from the constituents they were elected to serve.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.wymondhammagazine.co.uk/news/town-council-watch-spooky-special> - This article discusses a technical issue during a Wymondham Town Council meeting, where the YouTube stream had no audio, leading to the use of alternative methods to access the meeting's content.
2. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24228691.wymondham-council-introduces-red-cards-meetings/> - This piece reports on Wymondham Town Council's introduction of a 'red card' system, allowing councillors to leave meetings if they experience high levels of anxiety, following a resignation speech that triggered such an episode.
3. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/lib-dem-council-red-card-system-anxious-meetings-wymondham-town> - This article covers the implementation of the 'red card' system by Wymondham Town Council, enabling councillors to signal distress during meetings and take a break, with reactions from various council members.
4. <https://metro.co.uk/2024/04/05/council-introduces-red-cards-anxious-members-20594916/> - This report details Wymondham Town Council's adoption of 'red cards' for councillors to indicate anxiety during meetings, including the background of the decision and reactions from council members.
5. <https://www.wymondhammagazine.co.uk/news/town-council-watch-feb-2024> - This article highlights the failure of Wymondham Town Council's YouTube live stream during a meeting, leading to the use of alternative methods to access the meeting's content.
6. <https://www.change.org/p/live-stream-wymondham-town-council-meetings> - This petition calls for Wymondham Town Council to live-stream their meetings to the public, emphasizing the importance of public participation and transparency in local governance.
7. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25133348.wymondham-town-council-stop-livestreaming-meetings/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data