

**South Ayrshire Council**

**Report by Head of Finance and ICT  
to South Ayrshire Council  
of 1 October 2020**

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**Subject: Hybrid Meetings: Local and Remote Attendance at Council Meetings**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's agreement to the high-level user requirements for a hybrid meeting system and to progress with market engagement to identify an appropriate solution.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Council:**

- 2.1.1 agrees the high-level user requirements detailed in 4.1 and the associated scenarios to be the basis of the market engagement;**
- 2.1.2 agrees that a new bespoke post of Audio-Visual/ Sound Administrator be included within the cost implications of the agreed solution;**
- 2.1.3 notes that soft market testing has begun regarding possible technical solutions but as yet potential costs are unknown but will be included in a future Leadership Panel paper (per 2.1.5 below);**
- 2.1.4 agrees that the Efficiency and Improvement fund meet the first three-years cost of the chosen solution, thereafter the cost will require to be mainlined within the Councils revenue budget; and**
- 2.1.5 requests that the Head of Finance and ICT reports back to Leadership Panel following the conclusion of the market engagement to seek final agreement on the most suitable solution and associated costs.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Special Council of 1 September approved the following amendment to a motion raised in relation to public access to formal Council meetings:

*The Council notes the need for accountability and scrutiny by the public of our business and decisions; that along with other local authorities this has been impacted by COVID-19 and our inability to have physical meetings with the public and press in attendance.*

*Council recognises that, despite exclusion of the public remaining permissible under COVID-19 legislation, work has been done by ICT in recent weeks on how audio and/or video access can be granted to Council meetings for the public and press and, once testing is complete, ICT are requested to present a report to the next Council meeting setting out the detail of the process, associated costs and security for implementing audio and/or video access to Council meetings.*

3.2 In recent months, during the Covid-19 lockdown period, colleagues in ICT Services and Committee Services have worked together to develop and test technical solutions, along with new meeting protocols, to enable formal meetings to take place in the most efficient and effective way possible given the current technical capabilities and the social distancing requirements of Covid-19. These solutions have generally been a success, especially in relation to smaller Panel meetings.

3.3 In addition to this on-going internal work, a survey of all 32 Councils has been undertaken to establish how other Councils are managing formal meetings both pre Covid-19 and during the pandemic. The results of this survey are attached as [Appendix 1](#) and are summarised as follows:

(i) Type of meeting – the majority of Councils are holding remote meetings during the pandemic.

Remote	Remote/Face to Face	Hybrid
24	7	1

(ii) In terms of the technical solution being used by Councils there appears to be a wide variety of approaches being used.

Teams	Skype for Business	WebEx	Zoom	Public-i (inc Teams)	VScene	Unknown
9	4	1	1	9	1	7

(iii) In terms of public access to these meetings again there is a mixed approach being taken.

Live feed – video	Live feed – audio	Recording	Minutes only
11	4	5	12

3.4 It is clear from the survey results that there are many different approaches being taken across Scotland to the conduct of formal meetings which may well be a result of the current technologies available within each Council.

- 3.5 As we move towards the post-Covid normal, it seems clear that some degree of remote working will remain for the access of officers and Members to formal meetings and the access for the public to these meetings. In addition, there are a high number of informal internal and partner meetings being conducted through a wide variety of remote technologies that provide efficient ways of working that Councils and partners will wish to retain. This poses a problem for the Council: how to accommodate both local and remote attendees to both formal and informal meetings and (where appropriate) allow public access.
- 3.6 The difficulties of managing these so-called hybrid meetings are well known as evidenced by work undertaken in recent weeks. It is a challenge to ensure everyone, remote and present, has an equal chance to participate without the added complexities involved in granting public access. All attendees need to see and hear each other clearly. Everyone needs to be able to present and watch presentations. Council meetings also need to meet statutory requirements for voting and impartiality, as well as standards around transparency and accessibility and meet the requirements of the Council's agreed governance processes and protocols.

#### 4. Proposals

- 4.1 In recent weeks, the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and ICT, the Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services and colleagues from Committee Services and ICT Services have met to discuss at length the necessary requirements and scope in approaching the implementation of the desired new way of working. As a result of these considerations, high level user requirements have been developed and have been categorised, based on the MoSCoW prioritisations of Must, Should and Could, as follows:

##### ***High Level User Requirements***

<b>Must have:</b>
ability to broadcast Council meetings to the public, using either audio or audio and video technologies from County Hall (and possibly other meeting rooms)
allow usage of wireless technologies in the County Hall without creating audio interference
ability for SAC elected members to fully participate in any meeting irrespective of their remote location or in County Hall
the user experience will be identical, if all users require to be 'remote'. This would apply in the short term if any local lockdown was required
Council employees will require to attend the meetings, either remotely or in County Hall
suitable equipment will require to be available in County Hall to ensure clear audio and video is available for each speaker during sessions. It must be noted that options for both fixed desk and a flexible layout are required
ability for a meeting administration facility to allow participants to be muted and removed from online meetings

<b>Should have:</b>
non-Council employees (public/press) should be able to participate in the sessions via either audio or video
<b>Could have:</b>
content could be made available real-time or could be made available after the event via the Council website, via recordings

- 4.2 The agreement of the above high-level requirements will allow market engagement to commence.
- 4.3 These high-level user requirements have been distilled in to five scenarios, each of which will involve elected members and staff attending from County Hall or virtually from home, with remote public attendance.
- (i) **Scenario 1** - Audio only real-time public access to Council meetings.
  - (ii) **Scenario 2** - Audio only retrospective public access to recordings of Council meetings after the event.
  - (iii) **Scenario 3** - Audio and video public access to real-time Council meetings, participation is not required only access to the discussions.
  - (iv) **Scenario 4** - Audio and video retrospective public access to recordings of Council meetings, after the event.
  - (v) **Scenario 5** – Audio and video public access to real-time Council meetings, ability to participate in the discussions.
- 4.4 Any vendor seeking to provide a solution will require to detail the costs and implementation timescales for each of the four scenarios.
- 4.5 As this is a new way of working it is anticipated that a bespoke Audio-Visual Administrator will be required to be imbedded within the Committee Services team to operate the technical solution/equipment and support both the Committee Services team itself, elected members and meeting attendees on an ongoing basis. Any vendor provider will therefore also be required to define, at a high level, details of the resources recommended/anticipated to administer the service internally.
- 4.6 Initial soft market enquiries have been made and it is expected that both up-front costs for new equipment and ongoing maintenance and support contracts will be required for a technical solution that would potentially meet the high level requirements identified in 4.1 above.
- 5. Legal and Procurement Implications**
- 5.1 Governance, GDPR and security issues will be considered during the procurement engagement process.
- 5.2 Procurement of the appropriate solution is likely to take place through a framework agreement.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The up-front costs cost of the technical solution and ongoing annual support and maintenance cost are as yet unclear. The required Audio-visual/ Sound Administrator post has yet to be defined and evaluated therefore the costs are also unknown at this stage.
- 6.2 This proposal is aimed at re-designing and developing the service provision to be more efficient and effective. It is therefore proposed that funding for both the technical solution and support post for the first three years is drawn from the Efficiency and Improvement Fund. Thereafter the cost will require to be mainlined within the Councils revenue budget.
- 6.3 The Efficiency and Improvement fund currently has £0.588m of unallocated funds available. Final costings of the new approach will be confirmed in the future report to Leadership Panel.

## **7. Human Resources Implications**

- 7.1 A specialised post of Audio-visual/ Sound Administrator is envisioned to be necessary to administer the system and to meet internal support requirements. Any post established will be evaluated and graded through the Councils Job evaluation scheme.

## **8. Risk**

### **8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations***

- 8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

### **8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

- 8.2.1 There is a risk that the Council's desire to implement audio and/or video access to Council meetings will not be achieved if the recommendations are rejected.

## **9. Equalities**

- 9.1 The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment Scoping process. There are no significant potential positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

## **10. Sustainable Development Implications**

- 10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

## 11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

## 12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to the Council strategic objective of 'Effective leadership that promotes fairness' and within that to the outcome 'Ensure the Council is structured to make the best use of resources'.

## 13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Peter Henderson, Portfolio Holder for Corporate, and Councillor Brian McGinley, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

## 14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Head of Finance and ICT will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Leadership Panel in the 'Council and Leadership Panel Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Managed by</i>
Report back to Leadership Panel with proposed solution	24 November 2020	Head of Finance and ICT

**Background Papers**    **None**

**Person to Contact**    **Tim Baulk, Head of Finance and ICT**  
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**Date:**    **24 September 2020**

## Council Meetings – Current Position

### Survey of other Councils

<b>Council</b>	<b>What are they doing?</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Meeting type</b>
Aberdeen City	Public-i Live and recorded meetings available.	Live feed for public	Public-i	Remote Face-to-face
Aberdeenshire	Skype for Business Recordings available after meeting d	No live feed for public	Skype	Remote
Angus	Video conferencing Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Unknown	Remote
Argyll and Bute	Skype for Business – Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Skype	Remote
Clackmannanshire	Microsoft Teams Recording made available after meeting	No live feed for public	Teams	Remote
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	Microsoft Teams Audio only – live and recording	Live audio feed for public	Teams	Remote Face-to-face
Dumfries and Galloway	Microsoft Teams Recording available after meeting	Live stream to YouTube	Teams	Remote Face-to-face
Dundee	Unknown	Recordings available after meeting	Unknown	Remote
East Ayrshire Council	VScene Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	VScene	Remote Face-to-face
East Dunbartonshire	Video conferencing Not available after meeting, only live	Live stream to YouTube	Unknown	Remote
East Lothian	Video conferencing Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Unknown	Remote

<b>Council</b>	<b>What are they doing?</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Meeting type</b>
East Renfrewshire	Public-i Recording of meeting available on website	Live feed for public	Public-i	Remote
Edinburgh	Teams streamed using Public-i Recording of meeting available on website	Live feed for public	Teams Public-i	Remote
Falkirk	Video conferencing Recording of meeting available on website	No live feed for public	Unknown	Remote Face-to-face
Fife	Teams Recording of meeting available on website	Live feed for public	Teams	Remote
Glasgow	Public-i Live and recordings available	Live feed for public	Public-i	Remote
Highland	Public-i Live and recordings available	Live feed for public	Public-i	Remote
Inverclyde	Skype Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Skype	Remote
Midlothian	Teams Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Teams Public-i (F2F)	Remote Face-to-face
Moray	Video conferencing Traditional minutes available only	Traditional minutes available only	Unknown	Remote
North Ayrshire Council	Public-i Live and recordings available	Live feed for public	Public-i	Remote
North Lanarkshire Council	Public-i but not using Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Unknown Public-i	Remote Face-to-face
Orkney	Video conferencing Live audio plus recording on website	Live audio feed for public	Unknown	Remote
Perth and Kinross	Teams	Live feed for public	Teams	Remote

<b>Council</b>	<b>What are they doing?</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Meeting type</b>
	Live (selected) and recordings available			
Renfrewshire	Teams Recording of meeting available on website	No live feed for public	Teams Public-i	Remote
Scottish Borders	Teams Selected meetings only	Live feed for public	Teams	Remote
Shetland	Teams Recording of meeting available on website	No live feed for public	Teams	Remote
South Ayrshire	Skype for Business Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Skype	Hybrid
South Lanarkshire	Teams Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Teams	Remote
Stirling	Teams Traditional minutes available only	No live feed for public	Teams	Remote
West Dunbartonshire	Zoom Audio only for select meetings	Live audio feed for public	Zoom	Remote
West Lothian	WebEx Audio only for select meetings	Live audio feed for public	WebEx	Remote

### Summary - Public

Live feed – video	Live feed – audio	Recording	Minutes only
11	4	5	12

### Summary - Solution

Teams	Skype for Business	WebEx	Zoom	Public-i (inc Teams)	VScene	Unknown
9	4	1	1	9	1	7

### Summary – Type of Meeting

Remote	Remote/F2F	Hybrid
24	7	1

## 1. Proposal details

Proposal Title <b>Hybrid Meetings: Local and Remote Attendance at Council Meetings</b>	Lead Officer <b>Tim Baulk</b>
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2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this proposal? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts

Community, Groups of People or Themes	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
The whole community of South Ayrshire	-	-
People from different racial groups, ethnic or national origin.	-	-
Women and/ or men (boys and girls)	-	-
People with disabilities	-	-
People from particular age groups for example Older people, children and young people	-	-
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people	-	-
People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process to change sex	-	-
Pregnant women and new mothers	-	-
People who are married or in a civil partnership	-	-
People who share a particular religion or belief	-	-
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights, Rurality and Deprivation	-	-

3. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the proposal will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes	Level of Negative and/ or Positive Impact (high, medium or low)
Eliminate discrimination and harassment faced by particular communities or groups	Low impact
Promote equality of opportunity between particular communities or groups	Low impact
Foster good relations between particular communities or groups	Low impact
Promote positive attitudes towards different communities or groups	Low impact
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	Low impact
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	Low impact
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	Low impact
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	Low impact

## 4. Summary Assessment

<b>Is a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) required?</b> (A full EQIA must be carried out on all high and medium impact proposals)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Rationale for decision:</b>  <b>This report seeks the Council's agreement to the high-level user requirements for a hybrid meeting system and to progress with market engagement to identify an appropriate solution. Their decision on this has no specific equality implications.</b>	
Signed : <b>Tim Baulk</b>	Head of Service
Date: <b>8 September 2020</b>	Copy to <a href="mailto:equalities@south-ayrshire.gov.uk">equalities@south-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>