

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

REFERENCE FROM DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE: 17TH JULY, 2023

“214 REVISED MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS POLICY (HDS) –

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer in presenting the report drew Committee’s attention to the revised draft Multi-Location Meetings (MLM) Policy attached at Appendix A to the report which had been prepared having regard to the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”) and the recent Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance that had been published on 15th June, 2023, and that the previous MLM Policy had been prepared having regard to Welsh Government’s interim guidance that had been received in August 2021.

As referred to in paragraph 2.2 of the report the Statutory Guidance (June 2023) at Part 3, paragraph 1.50 stated that the Act required Principal Councils to broadcast meetings of the Full Council live as they happened. This development being to allow the public to follow the proceedings of the Full Council in real time from wherever they were, to hear the contribution of their local representatives and understand the issues raised in respect of agenda items. The Council was required to make the broadcast available electronically for a reasonable period after the meeting. It was also noted within the Statutory Guidance that this was to be the first step in respect of broadcasting with Welsh Government intending to extend this requirement to a number of other Council Committee meetings in the future. The report also referred at paragraph 2.3 that the Statutory Guidance advised that relevant Local Authorities could develop their MLM arrangements to reflect what was right for them and the communities they served. Part 15, paragraph 15.58 of the Guidance stated that the exact contents of the MLM Policy were to be agreed at local level with Councils being able to decide which meetings would have physical provision made for them and which would be conducted wholly through remote means.

Having regard to the Cabinet decision taken on 8th June, 2023 in respect of the Council’s hybrid solution provider and the recently issued Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance, a review of the Council’s MLM Policy as contained within Section 4 paragraph 4.17 of the Council’s Constitution had been undertaken. A copy of the revised draft MLM Policy which contained additions and deletions highlighted in red on the document for Committee’s consideration was attached as an Appendix to the report.

The report to Cabinet on 8th June, 2023 had also drawn attention to which Council meetings should be undertaken on a hybrid basis and broadcast live, having regard to the requirements of “the Act”, Welsh Government Statutory Guidance as referred to in paragraph 2.1 of the report and Council resources. It was therefore being recommended within the revised MLM Policy that the following Council meetings be

conducted and broadcast on a hybrid basis (save for when Part II matters were to be discussed):

- Full Council,
- Cabinet,
- Planning,
- Governance and Audit Committee, and
- a Scrutiny Committee meeting that is to consider a matter of significant County-wide interest (the matter of significant County wide interest being determined by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive).

It was further recommended within the draft MLM Policy that all other Committee meetings would operate on a remote basis, be recorded and uploaded to the Council's website post meeting. Some meetings, such as the Senior Management Appointment Committee, it was proposed to be conducted on an 'In person' basis (e.g. where interviews were to be conducted) with a decision as to whether to hold such an 'in person' meeting being taken by the Chair of the Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive. Councillor Dr. Johnson queried whether the proposed reduction in meetings broadcast live represented "backsliding" compared to the current provision. The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Committee Services Officer advised that the Policy had been drafted in line with the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance, June 2023, and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer also drew Committee's attention to the provision of Welsh Language at meetings, advising that the Council's Welsh language service provider (Cardiff Council) required a minimum of three working days' notice to ensure a linguist was available to support a formal meeting. It was also apparent that there appeared to be a shortage of Welsh simultaneous translators across Wales, which was why translation service providers required an adequate notice period to arrange for a translator to be available. To address this notice requirement a survey had recently been conducted with all Members and Co-opted Members of the Council with the purpose of establishing individual Members' language preferences (English, Welsh or both) in relation to each Committee each Member sat on. From liaising with other Councils, some had indicated that they had also undertaken a survey of Members in this regard. The responses to the survey indicated that six Elected and Co-opted Members of the Vale Council had advised of the Committee meetings where they would suggest for themselves Welsh Translation Services be made available. This would assist in addressing the need to provide the stated period of notice.

Councillor Carroll registered his disappointment that the MLM Policy was proposing that not all Scrutiny Committees be undertaken on a hybrid basis or broadcast live. He however stated that he recognised that the Senior Management Appointment Committee when conducting interviews should take place in person as should other meetings of a similar nature. Councillor Carroll also considered that the reference to dressing appropriately for a meeting was subjective as referenced in paragraph 4.17.3.14 of the revised draft MLM Policy.

Councillor Mahoney commented that in his view Members should all be returning to face to face meetings within the Chamber although recognising that some Members should be able to attend remotely if they so wished.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in referring to the requirements of the legislation and the Statutory Guidance as contained within the report at paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3, reaffirmed that the revised MLM Policy had been reviewed in light of the Statutory Guidance and legislation stating that broadcasting all meetings live and undertaking all meetings on a hybrid basis would be resource intensive for staff and the Council. This would include not only more than one officer from Democratic Services, but other officers from other service areas in particular ICT being in attendance to support, arrange hybrid meetings and live broadcasts. The Council had to consider the wellbeing of staff and the resources that would be required to conduct such meetings which would be considerably increased. Officers had therefore considered the Guidance and the legislation in detail having regard to such matters. The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services also drew Members' attention to paragraph 15.23 of the Statutory Guidance which stated that "physical meetings should not be seen as representing the gold standard with multi location meetings being second best. Physical meetings may be convenient and effective for those familiar with and comfortable with how they work but they may also be inaccessible and impractical for many." Specific reference was also made to paragraph 15.60 of the Guidance that 'some relevant authorities may decide that all meetings will be conducted through remote means by default. Relevant authorities may wish to adopt different approaches for different bodies and for different circumstances'. The Principal Officer also referred to analytical information that had further been considered when submitting the proposals contained within the draft MLM Policy which advised that viewing figures were both low when meetings were being live streamed and thereafter when recordings were uploaded and archived on the Council's website.

In commenting further on the Guidance as part of its strategy Councils should explore the views of the public about which of the Council's Committees they considered should be broadcast, the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that this would be undertaken by the Council through its Participation Strategy process with further reports back to Committee as required.

In referring to Councillor Carroll's query as to the reference within the MLM Policy 4.17.3.14 that 'participants should dress appropriately for the meeting', the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that this had been included in the etiquette section of the previous and revised draft MLM Policy having regard to Welsh Government Guidance and although it was a subjective issue, the list detailed within the MLM Policy was proposed as a reminder to participants when undertaking hybrid and or remote meetings.

Councillor Goodjohn stated that he concurred with Councillor Carroll the importance for all Scrutiny Committee meetings to be held on a hybrid basis and broadcast live in order that the public could view proceedings live as had previously been the case for remote meetings of the Council and to encourage attendance.

Councillor Goodjohn also sought clarification in relation to the reference at paragraph 4.17.3.6 (c) where members of the public would be required to contact Democratic Services no later than one working day before the date of the meeting to attend a meeting being held at the Civic Offices. The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that members of the public would not be required to advise Democratic Services of their attendance at a meeting that would be held at the Civic Offices on a hybrid or in person basis. The one day's notice was in respect of members of the public wishing to view a meeting being held remotely online, if they did not have access to online facilities themselves, with it subsequently being suggested that for the purposes of clarity the paragraph be rephrased.

Councillor Thomas also sought clarity in respect of paragraph 4.17.3.20 (b) 'Record of Attendance', and the reference to seven days' notice for apologies. The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that it was not that Members would have to tender apologies to Democratic Services seven days before a meeting it was that under "the 21 Act" Councils were required to publish decision notices within seven days of the meeting (including the day of the meeting) and the paragraph referred to Members being able to offer apologies up to seven days **following** the meeting (which included the day of the meeting). It was therefore suggested that the paragraph be amended to read 'That apologies for absence be conveyed to Democratic Services within seven days of the meeting having taken place (including the day of the meeting), in order that apologies could be recorded in the Decision Notice and thereafter the minutes of the meeting'.

Councillor Perkes stated that it was important for the democratic process and for those unable to attend in-person meetings for meetings to be held on a remote basis and that she welcomed the report.

Councillor Protheroe commented that the work of the Scrutiny Committees should be transparent and that the Council should do as much as possible to live stream its Scrutiny meetings. Although she recognised that the analytics did not show a considerable number of people viewed the live streams and / or the archive footage, she did consider that the Council could undertake further work to enlighten the public on the role of scrutiny.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services reaffirmed for Committee that the proposal was that where meetings were not broadcast live such meetings would be recorded and uploaded to the website the next day.

Following a query from Councillor Hanks regarding officers' contractual terms and conditions and hours the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that the proposals set out in the report were in line with the Statutory Guidance for a hybrid approach where required, having regard to such matters.

Councillor Dr. Johnson, in referring to the number of references during the meeting regarding the MLM Policy being drafted having regard to the availability of resources, he was aware that no costings had been provided. He however took the opportunity to remind Members that the Head of Democratic Services was required to consider resource implications when preparing his Annual Report.

In enquiring as to the progress with regard to a hybrid software solution proposed for future meetings he asked if Members could receive an update at the meeting. The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that she would be happy to provide an update for Members under Part II of the agenda as the matter was confidential having regard to contractual and commercial matters.

It was agreed by the Committee to recommend to Cabinet that Council Scrutiny Committees be conducted on a hybrid basis and broadcast live.

Following consideration of the report and the discussions at the meeting, it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the revised draft Multi-Locations Meetings (MLM) Policy attached as an Appendix to the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval subject to the following amendments :

- (i) That all Scrutiny Committees be included within the revised draft MLM Policy to be undertaken on a hybrid basis and broadcast live.
- (ii) That paragraph 4.17.3.6 (c) on page 28 be amended to read ‘With regard to observing Remote / Hybrid meetings online members of the public will be able to view a meeting by accessing the link to the meeting on the Council’s website. If a meeting is held on a hybrid basis members of the public would be able to attend the meeting physically. Members of the public who do not have access to the internet to view remote meetings can request to attend a public viewing in a suitable location in the Civic Offices by contacting Democratic Services not later than one working day before the date of the meeting, e.g. if the meeting is held on a Monday, Democratic Services to be notified no later than the preceding Friday.’
- (iii) That paragraph 14.17.3.20 (b) on page 35 be amended to read ‘Committee Members are to inform Democratic Services no later than seven days after the meeting (including the day of the meeting), in order that apologies can be recorded in the Decision Notice and thereafter the minutes of the meeting’.

(2) T H A T following consideration and approval by Cabinet, the revised draft MLM Policy be referred to Full Council for inclusion in the Council’s Constitution.

(3) T H A T the revised MLM Policy be reviewed periodically by the Democratic Services Committee following any further Welsh Government guidance received, changes in legislation, consultation with the public or consequential changes agreed by Cabinet and thereafter referred to Full Council for inclusion in the Council’s Constitution.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To seek Cabinet approval having regard to Legislation, Statutory Guidance, and discussions at the Committee.
- (2) For inclusion within the Council's Constitution.
- (3) In order for the MLM Policy to be kept under review having regard to any legislative changes and Cabinet approval.

Attached as Appendix – Report to Democratic Services Committee: 17th July, 2023

Meeting of:	Democratic Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 17 July 2023
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Revised Multi-Location Meetings Policy
Purpose of Report:	To seek Committee approval following a review of the Council's Multi-Locations Meeting Policy and to recommend the same to Cabinet for approval and to Council for inclusion into the Council's Constitution
Report Owner:	Jeff Rees, Head of Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Karen Bowen, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Consultation has been undertaken with the Chief Executive and the Council's Monitoring Officer.
Policy Framework:	The approval of the Council's Multi-Location Meetings Policy is a matter for Executive decision. Amending the Council's Constitution to include the above Policy is a matter for Council.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet received a report at its meeting on 20th December, 2021 which provided a progress update on the legislative requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act") and on a hybrid solution for use at Council meetings. The report advised that as at 1st May, 2021 Section 47 of the Act required that all Local Authorities MUST make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meetings. • In compliance with the provision under the use of the Managing Director's (as amended to Chief Executive 24th January, 2022) Emergency Powers the Council from 1st May, 2021 published its arrangements for Attendance at Local Authority Meetings and agreed at the same time, in light of COVID 19, that all meetings would be live-streamed going forward. • In April 2022 a revised Attendance at Local Authority Meetings Policy, namely a draft Multi-Location Meetings (MLMs) Policy was prepared having regard to the requirements of the Act and Welsh Government's Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings published in August 2021. 	

- Cabinet in April 2022 approved a draft MLM Policy and referred the same to Council for inclusion into the Council's Constitution which was approved by Council on 25th April, 2022.
- In 2022 Cabinet also recommended that a review of the Policy be undertaken upon receipt of any further statutory guidance from Welsh Government, any accessibility requirements and the Council's public participation obligations.
- In June 2023 Welsh Government published statutory and non-statutory guidance for principal councils in Wales – Supporting Provisions Within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (WG23-23).
- Having regard to the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance of June 2023 a review of the Council's Multi-Locations Meeting Policy as contained within Section 4 paragraph 4.17 of the Council's Constitution has therefore been undertaken. The revised Policy is attached at Appendix A to the report.

Recommendations

1. Democratic Services Committee is requested to note that the Council's current Multi-Location Meetings Policy (paragraph 4.17.3) within the Council's Constitution has been reviewed in light of the provisions of Sections 46 and 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 21 and Welsh Government's Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales on Multi-Location Meetings (Chapter 15.0) published in June 2023.
2. That Democratic Services considers and recommends to Cabinet approval of the report and the revised Multi-Location Meetings Policy attached at Appendix A to this report and that the revised Multi-Location Meetings Policy be then forwarded to Council for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.
3. That the Revised Multi-Location Meetings Policy be reviewed periodically by the Democratic Services Committee following any further guidance, changes in legislation or consequential changes agreed by Cabinet and referred to Council for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. Having regard to Legislation and Statutory Guidance.
2. For Cabinet approval and inclusion into the Council's Constitution.
3. In order to keep the policy under review and having regard to any legislative changes.

1. Background

- 1.1 Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Welsh Ministers issued Regulations (The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020, 'the 2020 Meeting Regulations') which temporarily relaxed the rules for Local Authority meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Meeting Regulations were intended to enable Councils to safely continue to discharge their functions during the pandemic, whilst adhering to public health restrictions and guidance.
- 1.2 The provisions of the 2020 Meeting Regulations ended on 30th April, 2021 and were replaced by new provisions for Local Authority meetings made under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act"), some of which were to take effect from 1st May, 2021 and others 5th May, 2022.
- 1.3 Prior to the pandemic Council meetings were held physically in the Civic Offices. Some of these were webcast from the Council Chamber e.g. Planning Committee and Full Council on a regular basis, via the solution of the Council's webcast provider at the time. Some Scrutiny Committee meetings were also webcast where a matter of significant County wide interest was to be considered. The webcasts were broadcast live via the internet. Members of the public were and have continued to be able to register to speak at meetings where procedures allow i.e. Planning Committee and Scrutiny Committees and at scheduled Full

Council meetings members of the public are able to submit a question for a response from the relevant Cabinet Member. All minutes were and continue to be uploaded to the Council's website as soon as possible after the meetings save for the exception of Cabinet minutes which are subject to the Council's call-in procedure (paragraph 7.24 of Section 7 of the Council's Constitution).

- 1.4** As at 1st May, 2021 Section 47 of the Act required that all Local Authorities MUST make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meetings, also referred to as Multi-Location Meetings (MLMs). For meetings capable of being held virtually in May 2021 participants needed to be able to speak and hear each other.
- 1.5** Under the use of the then Managing Director's Emergency Powers the Council from 1st May, 2021 published its arrangements for Attendance at Local Authority Meetings and agreed that all meetings be live-streamed via remote means.
- 1.6** The Council currently broadcasts all its meetings save for matters of a Part II nature via remote means through Microsoft Teams via OBS software through to YouTube.
- 1.7** In August 2021 Welsh Government published interim Statutory Guidance on MLMs in relation to Sections 46 and 47 of the Act . Their purpose being to achieve greater accessibility and improved public participation in Local Democracy <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/interim-statutory-guidance-on-multi-location-meetings.pdf>
- 1.8** In addition to Section 47 requirement, Section 46 of the Act also requires Local Authorities from 5th May, 2022 to undertake the following:
 - (1) A principal council must make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that—
 - (a) a broadcast of proceedings at a meeting to which subsection (2) applies is available electronically so that members of the public not in attendance at the meeting can see and hear the proceedings;
 - (b) the proceedings are broadcast as they take place, subject to any specified exceptions;
 - (c) the broadcast is available electronically for a specified period after the meeting.
 - (2) This subsection applies to proceedings at a meeting, or any part of a meeting, which is open to the public of—
 - (a) a principal council;
 - (b) any of the following specified bodies—
 - (i) the executive of a principal council;
 - (ii) a committee or sub-committee of an executive of a principal council;
 - (iii) a committee or sub-committee of a principal council;

- (iv) a joint committee, or a sub-committee of a joint committee, of two or more principal councils.
- (3) The Welsh Ministers may by regulations make further provision in connection with the broadcast of proceedings at a meeting to which subsection (2) applies.
- (4) In subsections (1) and (2), “specified” means specified in regulations made by the Welsh Ministers.

- 1.9** As a result of issues experienced with the Council’s Hybrid meeting solution at the Council meeting in September 2022, a decision was taken by the Chief Executive to revert back to using MS Teams solution for holding meetings of the Council. The issues experienced in terms of the reliability of the hybrid meeting solution was reported to Cabinet on 17th November, 2022 which included details of remedial action to be taken.
- 1.10** Following a period of regression testing a further report was submitted to Cabinet on 8th June, 2023 setting out proposals for the preferred way forward and which were subsequently approved. The MLM Policy has been revised taking account of the Cabinet’s decision made on 8th June, 2023.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** In June 2023 Welsh Government published Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – Supporting Provisions Within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (WG23-23)
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/statutory-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-principal-councils-in-wales.pdf>
- 2.2** Part 3 paragraph 1.50 of the Statutory Guidance states that “the 2021 Act requires principal councils to broadcast meetings of the full council live as they happen. This development will allow the public to follow the proceedings of the full council in real time from wherever they are, hear the contribution of their local representatives and understand the issues raised in respect of agenda items. The council is also required to make the broadcast available electronically for a reasonable period after the meeting. This should be available for at least six months following the meeting. This should not be seen as a prohibition on councils to the broadcast of other meetings of the council. This is the first step in respect of broadcasting and the Welsh Government intends to extend this requirement to a number of other council committee meetings in the future. As part of its strategy councils should explore the views of the public about which of the council’s committees they consider should be broadcast. This will require councils to ensure the public are clear about the nature and scope of each of its committees and sub committees.”
- 2.3** The Statutory guidance also advises that relevant authorities can develop their multi-location meetings arrangements as to what is right for them and the communities they serve. Part 15 Paragraph 15.58 advises that the exact contents of a policy will be agreed at local level and in particular refers that 2 How to decide which meetings will have physical provision made for them and which will

be conducted wholly through remote means also see paragraph 15.60 of the Statutory guidance.

- 2.4** Having regard to the Cabinet decision taken on 8th June, 2023 and the recently issued Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance, a review of the Council's MLM Policy as contained within Section 4 paragraph 4.17 of the Council's Constitution has therefore been undertaken a copy of the revised MLM Policy for Committee's consideration can be found at Appendix A to this report.
- 2.5** The overall purpose of Welsh Government amending the law as referred to in the statutory guidance is to give relevant authorities powers and freedoms to convene MLMs to achieve greater accessibility and improved public participation in local government and local democracy. These powers are linked to the requirement for principal councils to broadcast (by audio and/or video) certain meetings.
- 2.6** As also referred to in the Statutory guidance, MLMs offer Local Authorities the potential to update and transform the way they do business. It provides opportunities for Authorities to become more flexible and efficient and raise their profile in the local community and to bring their work directly into people's homes. Public access to MLMs is likely to be significantly higher than the level of audiences attending meetings in person previously and the guidance also advises that attendance levels during the pandemic bear this out.
- 2.7** The Local Authority is also under a duty to make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring Local Authority meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meetings.

Multi-Location Meetings (MLMs)

- 2.8** An MLM is a meeting of the relevant Authority (Principal Council) whose participants are not all in the same physical place. These are often referred to as Remote or Hybrid meetings (Hybrid being a meeting taking place both physically and remotely) and they can take several forms as below:
 - Meetings of a Committee where all participants are in the same physical location except one individual who joins from another location, with the physical public gallery being provided;
 - Meetings of a Committee where a roughly equal number of Members are present in a physical space and joining through remote means; those joining through remote means may include the Chair;
 - Meetings of a Committee where all Members are joining through remote means but nonetheless a physical public gallery has been made available in Authority premises;
 - Meetings of a Committee taking place wholly through remote means where no physical arrangements have been made.

The Guidance

- 2.9** The Welsh Government Guidance on MLMs states that Principal Councils:
- Broadcasts must be available electronically;
 - Make arrangements for “multi-location” meetings, at which participants can speak to and be heard by each other. Where meetings must be broadcast participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other (S47). The guidance also states (15.23) that physical meetings should not be seen as representing the “gold standard” with multi location meetings being second best. Physical meetings may be convenient and effective for those most familiar with and comfortable with how they work – but they may also be inaccessible and impractical to many;
 - Publish certain information, including notices of meetings, electronically, and electronic information relating to meetings must remain available in this format for six years following the date of the meeting. Relevant Authorities must also put in place facilities for the public who would otherwise not be able to do so, to access meeting documents.
- 2.10** The Authority must set out the details of its arrangements for MLMs. These arrangements must be guided by the general principles of Transparency, Accessibility, Good Conduct, Welsh Language, Local Needs and Future Generations.

Multi-Location Meeting Policy

- 2.11** It is important to ensure that participants and observers have access to easy to understand information which explains how they can and should engage in MLMs. The Policy, once adopted, shall be readily available electronically.
- 2.12** The revised MLM Policy set out at Appendix A provides guidance regarding the Council processes when conducting MLMs and Democratic Services Committee is asked to consider and recommend to Cabinet approval of the Policy and to Council for inclusion into the Council’s Constitution.
- 2.13** As reported to Cabinet on 8th June, 2023, the Council’s Welsh language service provider (Cardiff Council) requires a minimum of three working days’ notice to ensure a linguist is available to support a formal meeting. To address the Council’s service provider’s notice requirement a survey was recently circulated to all Members of the Council and Co-opted Members with the purpose of establishing individual Members’ language preferences (English, Welsh or both) in relation to each Committee each Member sits on. The responses to the survey indicate that six Elected and Co-opted Members have responded advising of the Committee meetings where they would suggest for themselves Welsh Translation Services be made available. This will assist in addressing the need to provide the stated period of notice. From liaising with other Councils, some have indicated that they have undertaken the above process (surveying Members). It has also become apparent that there appears to be a shortage of Welsh simultaneous translators across Wales, which is why Translation Service

Providers require an adequate notice period to arrange for a translator to be available. This view has also been informed by externally commissioned advice on the inter-relationship between legislation regarding the MLM Policy and the requirements of the Welsh Language Standard.

- 2.14** As the service will be required by 22 Local Authorities there is a small pool of translation suppliers who can / will be able to accommodate this service. Following site visits undertaken and liaison with other Councils across Wales, it has become apparent that other neighbouring Councils only provide Welsh Language translation services for some Committees, not all, they also only live stream some Committees with others being recorded and uploaded to the internet the day after or a few days after a meeting. As indicated in paragraph 1.6 of the report, the Council currently live streams and records all its remote meetings, save for confidential matters.
- 2.15** Committee is reminded that with regard to Members of the public or any other participant requesting to speak at a Council meeting where public speaking (including Welsh language preferences) is provided for, a registration process is in place. The public speaking guides will also be reviewed having regard to the MLM Policy and the Statutory guidance.
- 2.16** Having regard to matters raised in the report to Cabinet on 8th June, 2023 and 3 in relation to which Council meetings are hybrid and broadcast live, the requirements of the legislation, Welsh Government statutory guidance as referred to paragraph 2.1 above and Council resources, it is recommended that the following Council meetings be conducted and broadcast on a Hybrid basis (save for when Part II matters are discussed):
- Full Council,
 - Cabinet,
 - Planning,
 - Governance and Audit Committee, and
 - a Scrutiny Committee meeting that is to consider a matter of significant County-wide interest (the matter of significant County wide interest being determined by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive).
- 2.17** Other ad hoc meetings with a significant public interest can also be considered to be webcast by the Chair of the relevant Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive. However, it is important to note that any increase will require additional resources to support capacity issues within the Democratic Services Team.
- 2.18** It is recommended that all other Committee meetings will operate on a Remote basis and be recorded and uploaded to the Council's website post meeting. Some meetings, such as the Senior Management Appointment Committee, may and indeed often should be conducted on an 'In person' basis (where interviews are being conducted) and the decision as to whether to hold such a meeting 'in

person' meeting should be taken by the Chair of the Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive.

- 2.19** Training for all Elected Members and participants in meetings will be provided on the Council's hybrid meeting platform.
- 2.20** Paragraphs 15.138 – 152 of the Statutory guidance refers to a number of general principles for chairing meetings and all Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Council meetings. Committee Chairs will be reminded of these principles and requested to contact Democratic Services if further assistance is required should clarification be needed.
- 2.21** The Council's Public speaking guides for various Committees will also be reviewed having regard to the review of the MLM policy.
- 2.22** It is also proposed that the Democratic Services Committee, as recommended in the Statutory guidance, continues to have responsibility for undertaking a periodic review of the MLM Policy, with any recommendations being made to Cabinet having regard to Welsh Government guidance, accessibility and the Council's Public Participation obligations.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the "well-being goals".
- 3.2** These proposals are consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan and in particular the wellbeing objective 'to work with and for our communities', The proposals reflect the Council's desire to increase public participation in the democratic process, including involvement in meetings and also in attracting people to be a part of the Council.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** The costs associated with this policy will be met from existing budget provision, however where required any future cost pressure bids relating to this Policy will be reported as appropriate.
- 4.2** Committee is advised that resourcing live-streaming via this method has been and continues to be staff resource intensive. Although the Council agreed to live-stream its Council meetings from 1st May, 2021 (save for those matters of a confidential nature) there was no legal requirement at that time to do so and this remains the case.

Employment

4.3 None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

Integrated Assessment Implications

4.4 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage;
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language;
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English;
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.5 A draft Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken

5. Background Papers

Cabinet report: 8th June, 2023

Council's Constitution

4.17 Multi-Location Meetings **Remote Attendance**

The Multi-Location Meetings Policy has been prepared having regard to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and Statutory Guidance on multi-location meetings issued by Welsh Government June 2023

4.17.3 Multi-Location Meetings Policy

(a) Introduction

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, Welsh Ministers issued Regulations (The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020, 'the 2020 Meeting Regulations') which temporarily relaxed the rules for Local Authority meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Meeting Regulations were intended to enable Councils to safely continue to discharge their functions during the pandemic, whilst adhering to public health restrictions and guidance.

The provisions of the 2020 Meeting Regulations ended on 30th April 2021 and were replaced by new provisions for Local Authority meetings made under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act"), some of which were to take effect from 1st May 2021 and others from 5th May 2022.

In August 2021, Welsh Government published Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/interim-statutory-guidance-on-multi-location-meetings.pdf>

Welsh Government have now published, in June 2023, the Statutory guidance for Principal Councils on multi-location meetings which can be found at chapter 15.0 at

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/statutory-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-principal-councils-in-wales.pdf>. This MLM Policy has therefore been revised having regard to the guidance.

4.17.3.1 **What is a Multi-Location Meeting?**

- (a) A Multi-Location Meeting (MLM) is a meeting whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Some of the participants may be physically located in the meeting venue whilst others join from their home or other remote location.
- (b) Under the Act Welsh Government provisions confer on Local Authorities duties to convene MLMs to enable greater accessibility and public participation in the Local Government decision making process.

- (c) Section 47 of the Act required Local Authorities to make and publish arrangements that ensure that Local Authority meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables meeting participants who are not in the same place to attend the meetings and be able to speak to and hear each other. (This provision came into force on 1st May 2021 and the Council's Policy for this provision was approved under an Emergency Power in April 2021 and inserted into the Council's Constitution.)
- (d) However, from 5th May 2022 meeting participants must not only be able to speak to and hear each other but for meetings which are required to be broadcast under Section 46 of the Act participants actively taking part in the meeting must also be able to see and be seen by each other.
- (e) When considering arrangements for MLMs or Remote attendance the Authority will also have regard to Welsh Government guidance and / or regulations issued by Welsh Ministers.
- (f) Section 2 of Welsh Government's Interim Statutory Guidance sets out a number of principles to guide Authorities when developing their meeting arrangements which are transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh Language, local needs and future generations. The Guidance also confirms that the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the Council's Constitution.

4.17.3.2 **Broadcasting of Meetings**

Section 46 of the Act requires that the Authority shall ensure that meetings of a Principal Council (paragraph 21.2 refers) are broadcast live and are available to view electronically save for when the meeting is not open to the public (Part II – confidential or exempt information). The livestreaming of the meeting shall be published on the Council's website and archived thereafter for future viewing. **The Statutory guidance at paragraph 15.30 states Principal Councils must make arrangements for broadcasting certain meetings live, and ensuring that broadcasts are available electronically afterwards.**

4.17.3.3 **Notice of a Meeting**

- (a) The Authority will ensure that the relevant information shall be included on the Notice of the Meeting (Agenda) advising

the Committee Members, Officers and the public may attend the meeting.

- (b) The Act requires that Notices of Meetings and electronic information relating to meetings (i.e. including notices of meetings, agendas, reports and background papers) must be published on the Council's website and must remain available in an electronic format and be available for a minimum of six years following the date of the meeting.

4.17.3.4 **Agendas, Reports, Decision Notices, Minutes and Background Papers**

- (a) Agendas, Reports, Decision Notices and Minutes of formal meetings will be published on the Authority's website. A small number of hard copies shall be available to members of the public physically attending a meeting. Agenda papers are available at least five clear days (which includes weekends) prior to a meeting.
- (b) Decision Notices of a meeting (that came into effect under the Act in May 2021) must show decisions made; names of those present; apologies; declarations of interest and outcome of any votes and must be published on the Authority's website within seven working days of the meeting taking place, including the day of the meeting.
- (c) From May 2021 background papers must have also been published on the Authority's website.
- (d) There is no longer a requirement to post Notices of Meetings at the Council's offices (although the Vale Council has continued this practice to assist the public). However, hard copies of agendas and reports must be available for the public if meetings are held physically and the Council is also required to make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access documents, for example by providing access to computers, limited copies of documents at meetings or via a fee or making documents available for inspection.

4.17.3.5 **How are Physical or Multi-Location Meetings (MLMs) Conducted?**

- (a) MLMs are meetings of the Council or its Committees whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Such meetings can either be held:

- Hybrid – with some participants joining through remote means and some attending physically in the same place as others; or
 - Entirely Remote – whereby all participants are taking part via remote means.
- (b) Hybrid Meetings – will be conducted and broadcasted via the Council’s Hybrid meeting solution provider, ~~CIVICO~~, from the **Civic Offices** Council Chamber (save for meetings either partly or wholly **confidential** matters in nature).
- (c) Remote only meetings – will **also** be conducted via Microsoft ~~TEAMS~~ **its Hybrid meeting solution provider** and broadcast live via OBS software through YouTube (save for meetings either partly or wholly **confidential matters** in nature).
- (d) Entirely physical meetings – will usually be held in the Council Chamber at the Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry and broadcast via the Council’s Hybrid meeting solution provider, ~~CIVICO~~, (save for meetings either partly or wholly **confidential matters** in nature).
- (e) **Meetings of the Council will be conducted in line with the Council’s Code of Conduct for Members at Section 19 of the Council’s Constitution and the Conduct of Members – The Principles at Appendix 1 to Section 19.**

4.17.3.6 **How Can I Participate or Observe a Council Meeting?**

- (a) A participant at a meeting with the Vale of Glamorgan Council is defined **within the statutory guidance** as a person who takes an active part in the meeting. They may be an Elected Member, a Co-Opted Member (with or without voting rights), an officer of the Authority, a person giving evidence to a Committee as a witness, a person who has registered to speak at a Committee (in accordance with Council procedures), someone presenting a question at a Full Council meeting (under the Council’s procedure) or a representative from an outside organisation on a Committee. [\[View Public Speaking Guides\]](#)
- (b) A member of the public, not participating in a meeting, will be able to observe a meeting by either attending in person where a physical or Hybrid meeting is taking place and/or observing a Remote or Hybrid meeting. An observer at a meeting is defined in the ~~Interim~~ Statutory Guidance as a member of an audience, or otherwise spectating an MLM who may be in the same room that a meeting is taking place or they may be observing by remote means.

~~(c) Covid-19 has had an impact on physical numbers permitted in venues. As a result the number of persons permitted in a Meeting Room may (depending on the situation, any guidance and regulations in force at the time) be reduced and will need to be reviewed regularly in line with Welsh Government Regulations and in line with the Council's risk assessments and with safety measures being put in place to support safe access and use.~~

~~N.B. On occasions where physical space for attendance at a meeting may be limited (e.g. as a result of the COVID pandemic) or where there may be technological issues, the Chair of a meeting, essential officers supporting the meeting and simultaneous translators will be afforded priority for attendance. With regard to any further attendees the Chief Executive, and / or the Monitoring Officer and / or the Head of Democratic Services in conjunction with the Leader of the Council and / or Committee Chair will make any such further determinations. Should technical issues prevent live transmission all efforts will be made to ensure a recording of the meeting is made and uploaded to the Council's website.~~

~~(d) The Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with Facilities Management, shall ensure that the maximum physical numbers permitted is clear and that the following system will be put in place:~~

~~**(i) Members**~~

~~The Head of Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, shall inform each Political Group Leader of the number of their members allowed into the Meeting Room (the calculation will be based on the proportional representation of that Council Body and the Council's risk assessments). For Committees which have Co-Opted Members and Observer Representatives, the Head of Democratic Services will inform the Chair of each Committee of the number of Members (including Co-Opted Members) allowed into a meeting room in exceptional circumstances.~~

~~**(ii) Officers**~~

~~The Head of Democratic Services shall liaise with the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Head of Finance to ensure that the relevant officers are physically present where appropriate.~~

~~(iii) Members of the Public~~

~~Members of the public who wish to attend a physical meeting in the Council Chamber will be able to observe from the public gallery however, should the number of members of the public that wish to be present exceed the maximum number permitted in the Council Chamber seats will be allocated on a first come first served basis.~~

- (c) With regard to observing Remote and / or Hybrid meetings, members of the public will be able to view a meeting by accessing the link to the meeting online. Members of the public who do not have access to the internet to view live broadcasted meetings can request to attend a public viewing in a suitable location in the Civic Offices by contacting Democratic Services **no later than one working day before the date of the meeting e.g. if the meeting is held on a Monday Democratic Services to be notified no later than the preceding Friday.**
- (d) Councillors are encouraged to bring their Council devices to physical meetings so that they can view the agenda papers online.
- (e) ~~A participant at a meeting (as defined in paragraph 6.1 above)~~ **member of the public** wishing to speak **at a Council meeting in Welsh** or a person wishing to use the Welsh Language translation service ~~at a meeting of the Council where public speaking is allowed,~~ is required to contact Democratic Services **complete the online registration process at least three working days prior to the date of the meeting** ~~at least 72 hours before the meeting.~~
- (f) **For Elected / Co-opted Members of the Council, when appointed, a survey will be undertaken to ascertain individual language preferences at meetings of Committees of which they are Members.**
- (g) **Where expert witnesses are invited to attend meetings their language preference will be identified by Democratic Services when attendance arrangements are made.**

4.17.3.7 Quorum

- (a) The quorum of a meeting is one quarter of the voting Members unless specified otherwise within the Council's Constitution. The quorum shall include those attending Remotely, at a Multi-Location or physically; providing they

are able to speak and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by others when actively participating in proceedings.

- (b) If the numbers present fall below the quorum required, the meeting ends immediately.
- (c) Apologies for absence by an Elected Member for a meeting can be accepted by Democratic Services up to the publication of the Decision Notice for the meeting i.e. up to seven days from the meeting (the seven days will include the day of the meeting as per the Act).

4.17.3.8 **Withdrawal from a Meeting due to a Prejudicial Interest**

- (a) Should an Elected Member declare a Prejudicial Interest at a Physical, Multi-Location or Remote meeting, the Member must withdraw from the meeting unless they have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Standards Committee. However, where Members of the public are able to speak at a meeting, the Elected Member can also remain to make their representations but must leave after their representations are made. (For further information on declarations of interests at meetings see the Council's Constitution.)
- (b) The Elected Member will be invited back into the meeting once the item relating to the prejudicial item has concluded. **The Democratic Services officer supporting the meeting will notify the Elected Member to rejoin the meeting by an agreed means either by email, text message or by sending a separate link for the Member to rejoin the meeting.** Should that person not respond to the call to re-join, the meeting will continue without them, providing it is quorate.

4.17.3.9 **Voting at meetings**

- (a) **Where there is no dissent at a meeting certain action will be resolved without a vote being recorded.**
- (b) **Where a vote is required** voting will either take place electronically, via a roll call or a mixture of both **should technical difficulties arise with voting electronically.**
- (c) All voting results will be announced by either the Chair, the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer or the Democratic Services Officer before moving to the next item of business.

- (d) Should a Member leave the room and not return, their vote will not be able to be provided by another Member. However, if the voting device or audio, on the laptop, is unavailable the Member may use the message facility in the Remote software to relay their vote to the Chair.
- (e) ~~Should~~ ~~Unless~~ a recorded vote ~~be~~ ~~is~~ requested in accordance with ~~paragraph 4.24.5 of the Council's Constitution, as mentioned in (b) above~~ the Chair will seek a consensus from Members. ~~If no objections are received the recommendations will be considered as carried ("no dissent")~~. ~~voting will either take place electronically, via a roll call or a mixture of both should technical difficulties arise with voting electronically.~~
- (f) In both a Hybrid or Remote meeting the vote will be carried out electronically and the names of those voting for, against or abstaining will be automatically recorded. ~~In the event of technical difficulties during the meeting~~ if a physical roll call of votes is taken this will be undertaken by the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services Officer at Full Council and for any other meeting by the Democratic Services Officer.
- (g) If a Member cannot initially be contacted to provide their vote, the officer will return to the Member and following a second attempt, if no response is received and the meeting remains quorate, the Member will be considered not present for that part of the meeting.
- (h) Remote attendees **should** only use the chat facility in the software system to:
- Alert the Chair if they wish to speak; or
 - If their audio fails to advise of the vote they wish to make.

It is also important to note that any information recorded in the chat facility will be a matter of public record which may be subject to a Freedom of Information request.

- N.B. ~~In the Microsoft TEAMS meeting platform Members may also indicate to the Chair that they wish to speak by activating the "Raise Hand" function. When using the CIVICO Hybrid meeting solution Members are required to activate the "Request to Speak" button which will add them to the speaking queue managed by the Chair and / or Democratic Services Officer. The above voting procedures are in addition to the procedures outlined in paragraph 4.24 of the Council's Constitution.~~

- (i) The chat facility **is not to be used for discussions** as all discussions must be made verbally in the meeting for the sake of individuals observing the meeting and / or the meeting recording if a recording is being made.

4.17.3.10 **How Will Exempt Matters be Dealt With?**

The Chair of the meeting shall inform the public when the meeting is moving into private session (Part II). The recording must cease before any discussion on the item commences. The Democratic Services Officer will confirm with the Chair when the recording has been stopped.

4.17.3.11 **Multi-Location / Remote Attendance – Is a Member “Present”?**

- (a) Multi-Location and Remote meetings provide additional challenges in terms of meeting attendance. There are a variety of circumstances in which this might become an issue e.g. taking of votes, loss of connection (WiFi or mobile).
 - (b) To be considered present, the Member must be able to speak **and be heard and to see and be seen by others if the meeting is broadcasted (this will include roll call and when providing any declarations of interest)**. At a meeting the Monitoring Officer and / or Democratic Services Officer shall provide **advice to the Chair in respect of** the local determination and will consider issues such as temporary interruptions associated with connection issues. **The Chair’s decision will be final (statutory guidance paragraphs 15.91 and 15.93 refer).**
 - (c) **Any failure in technology / connectivity which results in Members’ loss of contact during the meeting shall not invalidate any part of the deliberations or any vote taken.** The Chair of the Committee may adjourn the meeting if they consider appropriate whilst any technical issues are resolved.
- N.B. ~~Both~~ Meeting platforms operated by the Council have a participants list function which demonstrates to the Chair and Democratic Services Officer which participants are connected to the meeting at any given time.

4.17.3.12 **Public Questions at Council and Public Speaking Procedures**

- (a) Should a member of the public wish to ask a question at Full Council meetings they must give notice in line with the Council's procedure which can be found at (https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/Public-Participation-at-Council-Meetings.aspx)
- (b) Public speaking procedures for Committees (where procedures are in place) can also be found at: (https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/Public-Participation-at-Council-Meetings.aspx)

4.17.3.13 **Formality and Privacy at Meetings**

- (a) When attending Remote or Hybrid meetings (MLMs) Elected Members and any participants must ensure that the room from which they are accessing the meeting is secure and must ensure that the door of the room is closed so that no disturbance occurs during the course of the meeting as it is important to ensure a degree of formality in the proceedings.
- (b) Participants are encouraged to use a suitable "corporate" background. (A library of "Corporate" background images will be made available to Members for their use.) Remember that as proceedings will be live, viewers will effectively be able to view you working in your home.
- (c) Members are reminded of their responsibilities under the Members' Code of Conduct during meetings and in particular when considering exempt items during a meeting. Members should ensure that they cannot be overheard during discussions around confidential information. Members should consider the use of headphones for such meetings and make sure that they plan ahead.

4.17.3.14 **Etiquette at Remote / Multi-Location Meetings**

Paragraph 15.38 of Welsh Government's Statutory guidance states that in line with the Nolan Principles, MLMs, as with any other public meeting, should demonstrate high standards of conduct. The Nolan Principles were added to in the Statutory Instrument The Conduct of Members (Principles) (Wales) Order 2001 and these, as mentioned in paragraph 4.17.3.5(e) of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, can be found at Section 19 of the Council's Constitution and the Conduct of Members – The Principles at Appendix 1 to Section 19.

- (a) Participants should:
- (i) Dress appropriately for the meeting;
 - (ii) Ensure that their microphone is muted if not speaking;
 - (iii) Respect the Chair and others present;
 - (iv) Behave appropriately and be mindful of the Members' Code of Conduct; and
 - (v) Use the chat facility appropriately.
 - (vi) Use headphones, where appropriate to avoid background noise
 - (vii) Ensure their name/ and or title e.g. Councillor "John Williams" is displayed on screen,
 - (viii) Ensure that the equipment being used has sufficient battery charge for the duration of the meeting or is plugged into a mains power point
 - (ix) Join the meeting at least fifteen minutes before the meeting is due to start to check audio and video arrangements.
- (b) Disruptive Behaviour – If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chair will warn the person concerned (section 4.28 Council Constitution). If they continue to interrupt, the Chair will order their removal from the meeting. With regard to Elected Members, the procedure outlined within the Council's Constitution will apply (see Section 4.27).

4.17.3.15 All formal meetings will be facilitated by a Democratic Services Officer.

4.17.3.16 The following ICT equipment will be required by participants for Hybrid and Remote meetings –

- Microphones / Headsets;
- Cameras – if meeting is broadcasted;
- High speed Internet access; and
- Access to the relevant software (Chrome – internet browser) being used for the meeting.

(N.B. Council laptops and headsets have already been provided to all members and Co-Opted members and this equipment should be used for meeting attendance.)

4.17.3.17 Viewing and Attending a Meeting Links

- (a) For members of the public wishing to view the meeting the link to the agenda and to the broadcasting of the meeting will be available on the Council's website.

- (b) A link **to the meeting** will be sent to participants attending irrespective of whether the meeting will be undertaken via Hybrid or Remote means.

4.17.3.18 **Calendar of Meetings**

- (a) The Council's Calendar of Meetings is agreed by Cabinet on an annual basis and can be found on the Council's website at [\[Council Meetings\]](#). The Calendar will also include details of the time of the meeting. However, meetings can be subject to change or additional meetings included in the Calendar by the Chair of a Committee and / or the Chief Executive, as and when required. For details of the venues or whether meetings will be held via Hybrid or Remote means members of the public are requested to view the agenda papers online once published in advance of the meeting (see Section 4 above).
- (b) Following Local Government Elections the Council will have the opportunity to determine the most suitable date and time for meetings to take place. The Council will also be able to consider each Municipal year, if deemed appropriate, which meetings will be held predominantly physically, Remotely or Hybrid and also have regard to the Council's Diversity Action Plan.

4.17.3.19 **Invitations to Meetings for Participants**

- (a) Invitations will be provided to all meeting participants electronically, and the invitation will detail whether the meeting will be Hybrid **or** Remote ~~or physical~~.
- For meetings taking place on the **Council's meeting software solution participants will receive a link to their email address (Elected and Co-opted Members to their Vale of Glamorgan email address.) Please note the invitation is unique to the individual and should not be forwarded to another person as it will prevent you from accessing the meeting.** ~~CIVICO Hybrid meeting solution, Members will receive a Microsoft Outlook calendar meeting reminder for the meeting but will be required to log into their CIVICO account to join the meeting at the appropriate time.~~
 - ~~For meetings taking place on Microsoft TEAMS, the URL joining link for the meeting will be included within the Outlook invitation itself.~~

- ~~(b) Elected Members and officers will be provided with a shortcut icon on their Vale of Glamorgan laptop to connect to both the CIVICO Hybrid meeting solution and Microsoft TEAMS, whether the meeting is being held Remotely or Hybrid (CIVICO only).~~
 - ~~(b) Other participants attending remotely – members of the public and / or witnesses – will be sent a URL link to join the meeting.~~
 - (b) Prior to meetings Democratic Services Officers who support each of the Council Committees will also get in touch with registered speakers and / or witnesses to provide assistance if required.
- N.B. All participants are advised to contact Democratic Services at Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or telephone 01446 709413855 at least 48 hours before the meeting should they require assistance prior to the meeting.

4.17.3.20 Record of Attendance

- (a) The attendance of each Committee member will be recorded by the Democratic Services Officer supporting the Committee. These records will be combined or added to the Decision Notice and minutes of the meeting and published on the Council's website.
- (b) Committee members are to inform Democratic Services no later than seven days (including the day of the meeting) if they are unable to attend a meeting and their apologies will be recorded in the Decision Notice and thereafter the minutes of the meeting.

4.17.3.21 Broadcasting of Meetings

- (a) The broadcasting of meetings does not replace the formal record of the meeting and together with the decisions taken will be published on the Council's website and retained in hard copy in accordance with the Council's retention policy.
- (b) Having regard to section 46 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the meetings to be conducted and broadcast on a Hybrid basis, (excluding meetings **those items** that are ~~wholly or in part~~ confidential / **exempt** in nature) are Full Council, Cabinet, Planning, Governance and Audit Committee meetings and a Scrutiny Committee meeting that is to consider a matter of significant County wide interest. The matter of significant County wide interest

being determined by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive. **NB. The Statutory guidance requires Principal Councils (Part 3 1.50) to broadcast meetings of the Full Council live as they happen. However, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has agreed to include the broadcasting of further meetings, as outlined above. The guidance also states that a failure to comply with this requirement will not necessarily make any proceedings invalid.**

- (c) Other Committee meetings (including the Annual Meeting) will be conducted and broadcast on a Remote basis (excluding meetings **those items** that are wholly or in part confidential / **exempt** in nature) or unless determined otherwise by the Chair of the relevant Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive (**or nominated deputy in their absence**). ~~and / or Monitoring Officer and / or Head of Democratic Services~~. Some meetings such as the Senior Management Appointment Committee may be conducted on an 'in person' basis ~~only~~ (e.g. where interviews are being conducted) and ~~as such will not be broadcast where they are wholly or in the main Part II in nature~~ **the decision as to whether to hold such a meeting "in person" to be taken by the Chair of the Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive.**

N.B. All Committee meetings will be undertaken, as outlined in ~~Section 21~~ above, **and those to be broadcast and broadcast live will be broadcast on the Council's website and for all meetings the recordings will be uploaded thereafter for future viewing on the Council's website save for confidential matters.**

- (d) All agendas on the Council's website will clearly state whether the meetings will be held via Hybrid or Remote means. ~~and / or held physically.~~

4.17.3.22 Online Meeting Platforms

The Council's Hybrid meeting provider will provide the platform for all meetings of the Council.

~~The Council will use the CIVICO Hybrid meeting platform as its primary Remote / Hybrid meeting solution for conducting and broadcasting Hybrid meetings and Microsoft TEAMS for Remote meetings. The logistic and technical requirements for managing video and audio recordings for members sharing a physical space alongside individuals joining remotely requires specialist technology which is currently~~

~~being met via the Council's webcast provider CIVICO. Members are encouraged to use their Vale devices whilst attending meetings. Members of the Committees will also have access to the Microsoft TEAMS meeting platform for use in Remote meetings and informal day to day discussions and correspondence.~~

- N.B. Members are responsible for ensuring access to adequate high-speed internet when joining remotely. Advice can be provided on minimum standards where required. **The Council accepts no responsibility should a Member choose to use a personal device and encounters connectivity issues prior to or during a meeting they wish to attend.**

4.17.3.23 **Attendance at Meetings Whilst out of the Country**

- (a) Members wishing to attend meetings whilst out of the Country and using their own personal or Vale of Glamorgan Council devices will be able to do so by accessing free Wifi facilities as the Council will not be able to reimburse costs. However, to enable access to meetings on Vale laptops abroad Members will be required to notify the ICT Service Desk and / or Democratic Services at least **two weeks** prior to departure so that the necessary security measures that will be required can be put in place on the device in time.
- (b) Should Members wish to access meetings using mobile phones, due to the cost of international calls the Council would not be able to reimburse call costs with access via phones personal or otherwise then being a matter for the Member.
- (c) Technical support on any Council supported devices whilst abroad will not be able to be provided by the Council's ICT or Democratic Services Officers.

4.17.3.24 **Confidential and Exempt Information (Part II)**

- (a) Some information, in accordance with Legislation, may not be able to be made publicly available. This is known as confidential or exempt information (Part II). When such information is to be considered at a formal meeting the documents will only be made available to those entitled to view them on the Council's internal network. Such matters are usually scheduled at the end of an agenda in order to minimise any inconvenience to observers who will be required to leave the meeting prior to the items being considered. The Chair will request that members of the

public and press are excluded from the meeting (whether the meeting is being held by Remote or Hybrid or physical means) before continuing with the agenda. Any recording of the meeting will also cease.

- (b) If a meeting is being broadcast the recording will be paused and a notification displayed on the broadcast that the meeting is no longer open to the public.

4.17.3.25 Training

All Members and officers will receive training to be able to participate at meetings which will include the use of the meeting platform software for joining Remote meetings and the use of the conferencing microphones in the Council Offices when for Hybrid meetings take place physically in the building. Other participants will also receive support from Democratic Services regarding how to access the meeting.

4.17.3.26 Support for Meetings

In the first instance support for meetings will be provided by Democratic Services Officers who will ensure the following:

- Agendas to be emailed electronically (at least 5 clear days, which includes weekends, before the meeting);
- Monitor attendance at Remote meetings and will assist any participant to join or re-join the meeting;
- Facilitate the meeting, voting and take the minutes of the meeting. (Voting at the meeting will be undertaken in adherence to the requirements of the Council's Constitution and in line with Section 9 of this Policy)
- Facilitate the recording and livestreaming of meetings (in conjunction with an ICT officer).

Privacy Notice for Democratic and Scrutiny Services

(This Privacy Notice is supplemental to the Council's Corporate Privacy Notice linked below)

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Website-Privacy-Notice.aspx

This Privacy Notice is specifically for Democratic and Scrutiny Services.

Democratic and Scrutiny Services provides support and administration for the Council's Committee system in order for it to operate effectively.

In particular it:

- Organises and schedules meetings,
- Decides whether the meeting will be public,
- Issues public notices in relation to the meeting,
- Invites individuals to attend,
- Deals with correspondence received in relation to the business of the meeting,
- Deals with queries in relation to business of the meeting,
- Takes minutes of the relevant meeting,
- Issues agenda papers and minutes,
- Deals with any other issue relevant to the business of the meeting,
- Arranges for the retention of documents and reports relating to the Committee.

In the context of this notice the word meeting includes:

- Council meeting
- Council Sub Committee meeting
- Scrutiny Committee
- Scrutiny Sub Committee meeting
- Education Appeals Committee
- Governance and Audit Committee
- Any other meeting supported by Democratic and Scrutiny Services.

In order to promote open Government and Democracy most of the Council's meetings are held in public and accordingly anything discussed at those meetings will be public and any minutes, recordings or webcasts will also be public. There are some circumstances however where it is not appropriate for matters to be discussed in public, for instance the personal business of individuals or information that is financially / commercially sensitive. The agenda of the meeting will make it clear how information is to be treated.

Accordingly, if:

- you are submitting information to be discussed at a Committee,
or
- you are attending a Committee to speak, or
- you are submitting documents to a Committee, or
- you are submitting petitions to a Committee,
- you are submitting representations to a Committee,
- you are submitting or providing documents / petitions on behalf of others,

this information will be dealt with openly and in public unless the meeting, or part of the meeting, discussing it is not held in public in accordance with the exempt information provisions in the Council's Constitution.

If you are obtaining information from third parties, you need to ensure that they understand the above and **consent** to their information to be put into the public domain. The Council may ask you to confirm this, and information may not be further published unless we are satisfied that third parties have been made aware of this.

How do we collect information from you?

We collect information from you when you visit www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk. Also, when you contact us in writing, speak to us on the phone, email or talk to us face to face.

What types of information do we collect from you?

In order to provide the service, the Council may need to process some or all of the following categories of personal information about members of the public or Elected Members:

- Name and title
- Address
- Contact number
- Email address
- Comments in relation to Council business
- Special requirements to access meetings, including speaking in Welsh.

How is your information used?

In accordance with our public tasks the following applies:

- To be used at the meeting as set out above and where necessary names and comments made recorded in the minutes,
- When registering to speak at Committees, members of the public's details will be entered into a Council computer database.
- Any registrations to speak at Committee meetings and any information submitted to Councillors and Democratic and Scrutiny Services may be shared with Council Officers and affiliated partners (e.g. organisations the Council works with collaboratively to deliver services) for their professional observation and consideration.
- Any written correspondence received may be kept on file for future reference by the Council.

- Enable Members or Officers of the Council to investigate or assist with any issues which you may have raised. Also, so we can notify you of any updates.
- Refer your public representations across Committees in order to inform decision making.
- If your express permission is given, share with other members of the public who have registered to speak in order to nominate a spokesperson.

Who has access to your information?

We will generally only share personal data with Vale of Glamorgan Council staff or Elected Members who need it to perform their functions. However, as outlined above, if discussed in a public meeting the information will be publicly available.

In addition, we may rely on a number of exemptions, which allow us to share information without needing to identify a lawful basis for the sharing and without needing to provide you with information about the sharing.

Lawful bases

Our **lawful bases** for processing your personal information are:

- Consent.
- The processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out by us in the public interest or in the exercise of authority vested in us.
- The processing is necessary in order to protect your vital interests or those of another individual.
- The processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which we are subject.

What are your rights in relation to the personal data we process?

- **Access** – you can request copies of any of your personal information held by the Council.
- **Rectification** – you can ask us to correct any incorrect information.
- **Deletion** – you can ask us to delete your personal information. The Council can refuse to delete information if we have a lawful reason to keep this.
- **Portability** - you can ask us to transfer your personal data to different services or to you.
- **Right to object or restrict data processing** – you have the right to object to how your data is being used and how it is going to be used in the future.

- **Right to prevent automatic decisions** – you have the right to challenge a decision that affects you that has been made automatically without human intervention.

How long will we keep your information for?

We keep and dispose of all records in line with our record retention schedule.

Please contact the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Department on 01446 709855 or Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk for further information.

What security precautions are in place to protect the loss, misuse or alteration of your information?

We are strongly committed to data security and will take reasonable and appropriate steps to protect your personal information from unauthorised access, loss, misuse, alteration or corruption. We have put in place physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard the information you provide to us. However, we cannot guarantee the security of any information you transmit to us. We recommend you take every precaution to protect your personal information.

Broadcasting

Please note that certain meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council will be broadcast, (as referred to in paragraph 4.17.3.21 (b) above) you will be informed verbally if the meeting you are at will be. If it is then this means that you are being recorded both visually and in sound and that is made available on the internet. This is done for the purposes of supporting and promoting democratic engagement and public interest. We will retain the data for 6 years and then offer it to the archivist at the Glamorgan Records Office for permanent retention. You have the right to apply to access, rectify, restrict, object or erase this data.

Complaints

If you would like to make a complaint regarding the use of your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer:

By post: Freedom of Information Unit
Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, CF63 4RU.

By phone: 01446 700111.

By email: DPO@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

For independent advice about data protection, privacy, and data sharing issues, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) at www.ico.org.uk

For further information regarding this procedure please contact:

Democratic Services via email –
Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Address: Vale of Glamorgan Council, Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry,
CF63 4RU

Phone Number: 01446 709413855

N.B. This policy is in addition to the Council's [Remote Meeting Procedures / Rules](#) that can be found on the Council's website (and the Council's Procedure Rules as contained within this Constitution).