

Meeting of:	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Tuesday, 16 July 2024</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Hybrid Meeting Platform Update
Purpose of Report:	To update Democratic Services Committee on the use of the Council's hybrid meeting platform.
Report Owner:	Rob Thomas, Chief Executive
Responsible Officer:	Karen Bowen, Interim Head of Democratic Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Consultation has been undertaken with the Leader, Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Resources and the Council's Monitoring Officer.
Policy Framework:	The report is a matter for Executive Decision by Cabinet.
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee received a report on the revised Multi-Location Meetings (MLM) Policy at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 (Minute No. 214 refers) which provided a progress update on the legislative requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the LG&amp;E Act") and on a Hybrid Meeting Platform solution for use at Council meetings. The revised draft MLM Policy was recommended to Cabinet for approval subject to some amendments and a recommendation that all Scrutiny Committees be included within the revised draft MLM Policy to be undertaken on a hybrid basis and broadcast live.</li> <li>The reference from Democratic Services Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 was presented to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 (Minute No. C79 refers). Cabinet, on 7<sup>th</sup> September, proposed that the MLM Policy be adopted as recommended by the Democratic Services Committee but that there be a trial period of 6 months for Scrutiny Committee meetings to be held on a hybrid basis and broadcast live, save for when Part II matters were to be discussed. This would allow for further training of Members, the level of resources required to support hybrid meetings to be ascertained and an assessment of the livestream viewing figures prior to any further decision being made. The revised MLM policy was subsequently approved by Full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2023 for inclusion within the Council's Constitution.</li> </ul>	

- A progress update report on the hybrid solution was considered by Democratic Services on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 in relation to the implementation of the Easy Conference (EasyConf) Connect platform, training and support for Members, as well as works required within the Council Chamber to accommodate various meetings of different capacities. Following which, the Democratic Services Committee recommended to Cabinet that furniture and layout Option F be the preferred option for hybrid public meetings and this option was also resolved by Cabinet at its meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2023.
- Regular meetings of the Hybrid Implementation Project Team (HIPT) have been held on an at least a weekly basis attended by colleagues from Democratic Services, ICT, Facilities and OD and Learning, supported by colleagues from the Business Improvement Team to progress the implementation of the hybrid solution for use at Council meetings. The hybrid solution provider has also been requested to attend these meetings on an ad hoc basis when required to maintain open and regular lines of communication and to monitor performance.
- The progress made to date and the key decisions which are required to be made are as set out in the body of this report.
- This report proposes that the Council's MLM Policy be amended in line with paragraph 3.3 of this report and the Council's Constitution amended accordingly.

## **Recommendations**

- 1.** T H A T the Democratic Services Committee recommends to Cabinet that it continues the contract with VP-AV Limited on a 1 + 1 + 1 year basis in order that future Remote and Hybrid Council meetings can be held on the EasyConf software platform.
- 2.** T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Director of Corporate Resources and the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, to continue the contract with VP-AV Limited on a 1 + 1 + 1 year basis from 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2024.
- 3.** T H A T all Scrutiny Committee meetings be held on a remote basis only unless a matter of County wide interest has been determined by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive and the Council's current Multi-Location Meetings (MLM) Policy in the Constitution be amended accordingly.
- 4.** T H A T the MLM Policy be amended to read that the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Joint Committee Annual Meeting can be held on a hybrid (and /or in person) basis subject to the Chair of the Committee's agreement.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 1.** To seek Cabinet approval having regard to the robust monitoring undertaken and to ensure the Council has a hybrid meeting platform solution in place for undertaking Council meetings.
- 2.** To seek Cabinet approval for the contract with VP-AV to be entered into and ensure appropriate delegations are in place to execute the procurement and contractual processes.
- 3.** Having regard to resource implications for the Council and the statistical information collated during the trial period as referred to at paragraph 3.2 and Appendix 2 to this report.
- 4.** To allow, if deemed appropriate, all Local Authority Members of the SRS Committee to meet on a hybrid (in person) basis at least once a year.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1** In June 2023, and updated in July and August 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/statutory-and-non-statutory-guidance-democracy-within-principal-councils>
- 1.2** Part 3 paragraph 1.50 of the Statutory Guidance issued in June 2023 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 several 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."*

- 1.3** The Statutory Guidance also advises that relevant Authorities can develop their multi-location meetings (MLM) 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 refers 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.
- 1.4** 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.
- 1.5** 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.
- 1.6** The Local Authority is also under a duty to make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring Local Authority meetings can be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meetings.
- 1.7** The EasyConf Hybrid Remote Meeting Solution was installed and commissioned in September 2023, and a programme of snagging followed to ensure the system was ready to be thoroughly tested ahead of the soft launch.
- 1.8** Once fully commissioned at the end of August / September, a programme of system testing was carried out on the EasyConf Hybrid Remote Meeting Platform in a number of scenarios, with different numbers of attendees attending in the Council Chamber, attending remotely from the Civic Offices whilst connecting to the Council's wireless network, attending remotely whilst connecting to home broadband and VoG VPN, and attending remotely whilst connecting to home broadband without being connected to VoG VPN.

- 1.9** Following discussions with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, as well as the roll-out of an EasyConf e-learning module to Members and Officers of the Council in October 2023, it was agreed that the below phased approach would be taken to introduce hybrid public meetings using the EasyConf hybrid software platform:
- Cabinet, 30<sup>th</sup> November;
  - Scrutiny Committees, Governance and Audit and Planning Committees during December 2023 / January 2024, and
  - Full Council Special meeting, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.
- 1.10** The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E Act) required Councils to put into place arrangements to allow Members to attend formal Council meetings from a remote location and these arrangements are reflected within the Council's MLM Policy. The MLM Policy therefore refers to the technology to enable remote attendance as well as the physical environment within the Council's Civic Offices to facilitate meetings.
- 1.11** As set out in a previous report to the Democratic Services Committee, the Council has been working to implement hybrid meetings using the EasyConf system and work has progressed to date to implement this in a planned, tested and risk assessed way to ensure its success.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

This report provides Members with an overview of the work undertaken to implement the technology (EasyConf), the support for Members in their use of the new platform and the changes to the Council Chamber made to accommodate meetings in line with the MLM Policy and has regard to the Cabinet decision to undertake Scrutiny Committees on a hybrid six month trial basis.

### **Implementation of the EasyConf Platform**

- 2.1** A complete log of issues raised has been maintained and monitored on a weekly basis by the Hybrid Implementation Project Team (HIPT). All aspects of system functionality have been tested, both within the Council Chamber and remotely and issues resolved accordingly with the Hybrid solution provider; VP-AV.
- 2.2** Simultaneous Welsh Language Translation functionality has been fully tested and works seamlessly for both local and remote attendees.
- 2.3** Hybrid voting has also been fully tested and again works for both local and remote attendees. This functionality will mean that all votes are now fully automated and recorded votes will take seconds to conduct, as the automation removes the need to go through the roll call to collect individual votes manually.
- 2.4** The hearing loop and Bluetooth transmitters have been tested with the microphones to ensure that any meeting attendees in the Council Chamber can hear proceedings regardless of the type of hearing aid they use.
- 2.5** A Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) card is available which allows Members to sit anywhere in the Council Chamber, however, currently the RFID seating

method is not being used by the team supporting the hybrid meetings due, in the main, to the numbers attending meetings in person. Seating allocations are therefore undertaken manually by the Democratic Services Support Officer (DSSO) and are not pre-set and the function has worked well. Once a delegate is programmed to their seat, the Hybrid Meeting Solution will automatically identify attendees when they press the request to speak button on their microphone. The meeting delegate will be displayed on the screen when they speak, along with their name and designation bilingually. This functionality provides much greater flexibility as meeting delegates can now sit anywhere in the Council Chamber without the need for their seating position to be pre-programmed into the system.

- 2.6** During the programme of testing, several issues were experienced during January / February 2024 in respect of the platform's functionality and participants ability to join meetings. From a technical perspective the way the platform is configured / set up meant that the technical issues experienced were out of the Council's control however, collaborative working with VP-AV (EasyConf) and MVI the software manufacturer has ruled out the majority of the issues experienced previously, with hybrid meetings proceeding in the intervening period.
- 2.7** Overall, the technology was working as required to support the soft launch of the system as outlined in 1.9 above and has continued to date with all Council meetings under the MLM Policy being undertaken through the EasyConf platform other than for the rare meeting where technical issues could not be resolved immediately.
- 2.8** During the testing of the use of the system it became apparent that the use of Council corporate background imagery was required, to ensure privacy and integrity of the live streamed meetings, as well as other high-resolution backgrounds that wished to be used by Members. Inherited imagery was available within the EasyConf remote platform but functionality was required to allow the user to upload their own imagery as well as to ensure that any imagery was operated on a low CPU setting. VP-AV have addressed this aspect with MVI (the software manufacturer) by implementing an image upload option to the background imagery settings in the remote platform, as well as a default low CPU setting when a background image is selected. Efforts have also been made in-house in relation to this functionality by ensuring that a catalogue of corporate imagery is available to all Elected Members as well as training on the functionality provided to members on request. Therefore, a resolution was achieved to the Council's satisfaction.
- 2.9** However, recently there have been two further, not previously experienced and which were not anticipated glitches within the system, at certain meetings as follows:
- Remote participant connection rights - participants were receiving an error message on the joining screen advising that they did not have the correct joining rights to connect to the meeting despite attempting to join using the correct meeting invitation.

- Camera software disconnection - The camera feed was not present on the DSSO control station, and therefore not displaying on the Chamber TV screens, however the system set up was as per the usual arrangements.
- 2.10** VP-AV have been working with officers from the project team to ensure these additional identified above glitches are resolved urgently. Both matters have now been resolved by VP-AV following a necessary software roll-out / fix and an onsite engineer visit, and are both now subject to further background testing at upcoming meetings.
- 2.11** The EasyConf remote platform also includes a Mosaic functionality, allowing all attendees of smaller meeting numbers to be clearly seen on screen at the same time, similar to the functionality within Microsoft Teams. Whilst this functionality is present, it was intended for this functionality to be tested at recent meetings of the Standards Committee, however, due to the technical difficulties experienced at recent meetings, as outlined above, this testing has been delayed but is still intended for future meetings of the Committee and subsequently to be rolled out to other small Committees as deemed appropriate.

### **Training and Support for Members**

- 2.12** Elected Members, outside organisation representatives and members of the public who attend meetings have received training on the use of the EasyConf meeting solution whether via iDEV, the Council's online training support system, or individual or grouped sessions with officers from the Democratic Services Team.
- 2.13** All Members received an enrolment invitation to undertake the related iDev e-learning certification, which was circulated on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2023. This included additional information relating to three in-person sessions in the week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> November to allow Members to access further support and experience in using the remote meeting platform and physical equipment in the Council Chamber to be comfortable and confident in participating in meetings using the new system.
- 2.14** The support of Group Leaders and Independent Members was sought via separate email to encourage their Group colleagues / themselves to participate in the above support arrangements.
- 2.15** As of 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2024, 59 out of 67 Elected and Co-opted Members had completed the e-learning video module on iDev.
- 2.16** DSSOs continue to provide advice and guidance to all meeting participants, at every meeting, to support with any technical issues the participant may experience, in relation to:
- Broadband network connection,
  - Dis-connection From the Vale VPN,
  - Quitting (not just closing) Microsoft Teams,
  - Correct meeting invitation,
  - Access to relevant meeting papers,
  - Microphone and Camera settings,
  - Remote participation control buttons,

- In-person microphone control buttons,
- Screen share functionality,
- Welsh translation functionality, and
- Voting functionality.

## **Council Chamber**

- 2.17** In addition to the implementation of the technical platform to enable hybrid meetings to be held, work was required within the Council Chamber to accommodate various meetings of different capacities. Members will note that the size of the overall Council Membership at the last Local Government Elections increased from 47 to 54 Members.
- 2.18** As part of the HIPT's work, consideration has been given to the current capacity and electrical infrastructure of the Council Chamber to be able to hold a Full Council meeting if all Members of the Council and relevant officers attended in person. A number of options were developed and considered by officers to identify the most practical and cost-effective solution to hold meetings of the Full Council in the current Chamber accommodation.
- 2.19** The Chamber's dimensions and shape posed a challenge in accommodating the maximum 'in-person' capacity of Elected Members and officers while aligning with statutory regulations, notably the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Equalities Act 2010. Additionally, design considerations to anticipate and accommodate potential forthcoming proposals from The Boundary Commission for Wales, add further complexity in terms of capacity requirements. In the May 2027 Local Government elections the Council is aware that Welsh Government are likely to increase the Council membership from 54 Elected Members to 58 Elected Members. This increase will have an impact for the Council / Service area on managing meetings, training for the new/ additional Members although the current Chamber layout of 40 persons capacity is unlikely to change as the political balance calculations will be used to calculate the number of Elected Member attendees able to be present in the Chamber.
- 2.20** In addition to the work undertaken in the Chamber, an evaluation of the existing power infrastructure, including distribution boards and floor power boxes, was conducted to inform the design process. When previously installed, the draw on the electrical capacity of the Chamber was not sufficient as it would be for meetings of this number of attendees and associated equipment. The designs agreed sought to strike a balance between functionality, compliance and future adaptability, whilst meeting the diverse needs and constraints of the Chamber environment.
- 2.21** In collaboration with the Council's Health and Safety Section and Building Control Section, the Facilities team conducted a risk assessment. This assessment referred to Building Regulation Approved Document B (Fire Safety) as a guide, focusing on establishing minimum unobstructed escape route distances and considering the specified widths for exits. Moreover, compliance with guidance from Building Regulation Approved Document M (Access to and use of buildings) was considered in the assessment.



**2.22** As part of the design requirements, power outlets for desks to support laptops and microphone setups were necessary and acknowledging requests for enhanced cable storage and power connections, solutions to meet these requirements such as placement of floor power boxes, minimising trip hazards from cables, and maintaining operational distances around furniture and occupants for safe movement and egress purposes were provided.

Six distinct desk layouts (Options A – F) were considered by the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 where it was subsequently recommended and approved by Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 that Option F as below be the preferred option for hybrid public meetings.

**2.23** Option F used the existing furniture in a compliant layout enabling a substantial proportion of the current Council Membership to be accommodated alongside a number of key officers to support meetings. The minimal costs of £3,500 (associated with electrical and minor repair works) were noted with a lead in time of 4 weeks to achieve this option. This option has since been achieved.

**2.24** As mentioned above in paragraph 2.19, to ensure accommodation for all political parties and Independent Members at Full Council meetings the layout was configured by the Head of Democratic Services on a political balance basis which has been used to date.

#### **Hybrid Implementation Project Team (HIPT)**

**2.25** As mentioned earlier in this report regular meetings of the HIPT have been held on an at least a weekly basis attended by colleagues from Democratic Services, ICT, Facilities and OD and Learning, supported by colleagues from the Business Improvement Team to progress the implementation of the hybrid solution for use at Council meetings. Representatives from VP-AV have also attended such meetings. A Hybrid meetings tracker log has been maintained and updated which details any issues raised and the resolutions provided and implemented.

**2.26** VP-AV have supported the group through the implementation process and where necessary have provided immediate support at meetings to Democratic Services colleagues and / or progressed requests for updates to the EasyConf system via the software manufacturer MVI.

**2.27** The HIPT, having regard to the key objectives outlined in the specification document, advises that the EasyConf MLM platform complies with the objectives as set out in the service specifications -

- To fully comply with the Section 46 of the Act in relation to the publication and broadcasting of Principle Council meetings;
- To fully comply with Section 47 of the Act in relation to the provision on MLMs and meet the conditions to allow all persons to be able to speak to and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by each other;
- To provide all meetings bilingually in Welsh and English;
- To provide all necessary information and documentation electronically and made available to the public;

- To ensure that all electronic data and documentation related to such meetings, be held in accordance with the required six-year retention period from the date of each meeting.

**2.28** However, having regard to the current lifespan of the microphones (delegate units) in the Council Chamber which will become end of life within the timescales of the contract with VP-AV, it is suggested that a review be undertaken with discussions to be held with the current provider Televic regarding options for replacements. Currently the Council has been informed that each delegate unit would today cost in the region of £1,200 per unit to replace. It is anticipated that any new delegate units would allow meeting delegates to plug headphones directly into them so they can hear the translator audio, doing away with the need to use the Infra-Red (IR) headphones and IR transmitters currently installed in the Council Chamber. Along with the cost of replacement delegate units, there would also be a cost to replace some hardware that currently integrates the existing model delegate units with the hybrid meeting platform. Costs for this hardware replacement would be identified as part of the review, as detailed above.

**2.29** Following the undertaking of all Council Committee meetings (remote and hybrid) via the EasyConf system to date, although there remain some user and system errors on occasions, the system has now been robustly tested and the HIPT are now in a position to recommend that the Council continue with a 1 + 1 + 1 year contract with VP-AV on terms to be negotiated and agreed with VP-AV and which will be reflected in a revised contract as to its term. A Service Level Agreement / Service Specification document will be negotiated and developed and will form part of the contract variation.

### **3. The Council's Multi-Location Meetings Policy –**

**3.1** The Democratic Services Committee considered a revised MLM Policy at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 (Minute No. 214 refers) which provided a progress update on the legislative requirements of the LG&E Act and on a hybrid solution for use at Council meetings. The revised draft MLM Policy was recommended to Cabinet for approval subject to some amendments and a recommendation that all Scrutiny Committees be included within the revised draft MLM Policy to be undertaken on a hybrid basis and broadcast live. The reference from Democratic Services Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 was presented to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 (Minute No. C79 refers). Cabinet, on 7<sup>th</sup> September, proposed that the MLM Policy be adopted as recommended by the Democratic Services but that there be a trial period of 6 months for Scrutiny Committee meetings to be held on a hybrid basis and broadcast live.

**3.2** The six month trial basis agreed by Cabinet commenced in December 2023, with internal testing undertaken beforehand, and Member training taking place later than anticipated in late October 2023, ahead of the soft launch in December 2023. Considering resource implications e.g. staffing costs to support Scrutiny Committees being undertaken on a hybrid basis, the following information is presented for consideration in order that an informed decision can be made moving forward.

- In order to support a hybrid evening meeting at least two DSSOs are required to be present at a meeting, one to manage the meeting, support the Committee by taking the minutes, providing advice and guidance to the Chair and Committee and the other to set up the microphones and Welsh Language translation equipment in the Council Chamber prior to the meeting as well as managing the use of the software platform prior to, during and at the end of a meeting. As a result, increasing costs for two DSSOs to attend evening meetings, whether as overtime payments or time off in lieu, are therefore incurred. For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2023 to March 2024 the overtime payments costs for the team for evening meetings equated to approx. £8,500 plus time off in lieu for one of the team members. To support and comply with legislation and Statutory and Non Statutory guidance in respect of the provision of hybrid and remote meetings staff are entitled to claim overtime or TOIL for evening meetings. However, there is no budget contingency for such costs. The Democratic Services Team is a small team with limited resources able to facilitate evening meetings which also impact on officers' work life balance and the ability of the team to perform other functions, such as scrutiny research, analysis and scrutiny development activity. If meetings were to be held in the daytime other officers within the Council or the team could be relied upon to assist and support daytime meetings. For Committee's information the number of meetings that took place in the evenings each month from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2024 can be found as an Appendix 1 to this report. It being accepted that some daytime meetings e.g. Planning Committee meetings may extend beyond 6.00pm. For Committee's further information the number of meetings held during the working day for the same period are also detailed in the same Appendix.
- Whilst it is not anticipated that ICT support will be required for all Council and Committee meetings, it may be possible on occasion that technical support will be required. Due to the timing of the majority of hybrid meetings, overtime is required to be paid to whomever is providing ICT support outside of normal office hours. There is currently no budget contingency to cover those additional support costs.
- Having regard to the trial basis the following information has also been ascertained for consideration as to whether all Scrutiny Committees should be undertaken on a remote basis. Over the six month trial period the statistical information attached at Appendix 2 to this report informs that the number of attendees in person at Scrutiny Committee meetings was limited.

**3.3** Therefore, having regard to the information set out in Appendix 2 to this report and as referenced above and the resource implications it is recommended that all Scrutiny Committee meetings that take place after 5.00pm be held on a remote basis only, unless a matter of County wide interest has been determined by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Chief Executive.

**3.4** Furthermore following a request from the current and previous Chairs of the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Joint Committee, as their Annual Meeting takes place in the day, it has been proposed that the SRS Annual Meeting be

considered to be held on a hybrid basis. This would allow for all Local Authorities within the Shared Service Agreement to meet each other at least once in a year, on a hybrid (and / or in person) basis, if considered appropriate. It is therefore recommended that having regard to the meetings being held in the day, where other staff in the Council and or / Democratic Services Office could be called upon to facilitate such requests via the hybrid platform that the request be acceded to for meetings for the SRS Annual Meeting to be undertaken on a hybrid (and / or in person basis) subject to agreement by the Chair of the SRS Joint Committee.

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

- 4.1** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must conduct 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.”
- 4.2** 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.

#### **5. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 5.1** The introduction of hybrid meetings seeks to reduce travel and energy consumption and are consistent with the Council’s Project Zero commitments.

#### **6. Resources and Legal Considerations**

##### **Financial**

- 6.1** 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. In particular, consideration to funding any replacement equipment will be required in terms of available resources, cognisant of the Council’s finance situation.
- 6.2** 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 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2021 (save for those matters of a confidential nature) there was no legal requirement at that time to do so.
- 6.3** Depending on the option for the Council’s Chamber, budget will be required to fund any further procurement required.

## **Employment**

- 6.4** The additional staff resourcing implications associated with facilitating hybrid meetings is set out in the body of this report.

## **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 6.5** Consideration has been given as referenced in the body of this report to the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974). Sections 2 and 3 of this Act mandate employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees while at work and to safeguard others from potential risks. Risks might arise if there is a failure to provide a safe working environment, including adequate provision of power supply to desks with non-fixed furniture, leading to potential hazards like cable-related accidents or electrical risks. In addition, disconnection of power supplying desks with non-fixed furniture poses risks related to operational disruptions, potential damage to electrical systems, and safety hazards if not managed appropriately. Such disconnections without proper protocols might lead to electrical accidents, data loss due to abrupt power cutoffs, or even impact on meeting business needs.
- 6.6** 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.
- 6.7** Officers are documenting an Equality Impact Assessment which will be taken forward.

## **7. Background Papers**

Report to Democratic Services Committee on [17<sup>th</sup> July 2023](#).

**NUMBER OF MEETINGS PER MONTH - APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2024**

MONTH	NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD	DAY TIME MEETINGS 8.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m	EVENING MEETINGS 5.00 p.m. onwards
Apr-23	13	4	9
May-23	14	6	8
Jun-23	13	7	6
Jul-23	19	10	9
Sep-23	22	13	9
Oct-23	14	6	8
Nov-23	20 (including 3 Council on same night)	7	13
Dec-23	11	4	7
Jan-24	16	6	10
Feb-24	17	8	9
Mar-24	15	7	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>96</b>

Above figures include Committee Meetings (as per Calendar of Meetings) and Panels/Sub Committees and Forums as listed below

Council (including ANNUAL MEETING)	6.00 p.m.
Cabinet	2.00 p.m.
Governance and Audit	6.00 p.m.
Community Liaison	6.00 p.m.
Democratic Services	4.00 p.m.
Early Retirement / Redundancy	4.00 p.m.
Licensing Sub	10.00 a.m.
Licensing Public Protection	10.00 a.m.
Local Access Forum	5.00 p.m.
Planning	4.00 p.m.
Public Rights of Way	10.00 a.m.
Corporate Performance and Resources	6.00 p.m.
Environment and Regeneration	6.00 p.m.
Homes and Safe Communities	6.00 p.m.
Learning and Culture	6.00 p.m.
Healthy Living and Social Care	5.00 p.m.
Senior Management Appointment	Normally within office hours
Standards	10.00 a.m.
Standards Appointment Committee	10.00 a.m.
Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison	6.00 p.m.
Welsh Church Act Estate	4.00 p.m.
Shared Regulatory Services	10.00 a.m.
Airport Consultative	2.00 p.m.
Glamorgan Heritage Coast	10.00 a.m.
Joint Consultative Forum	10.00 a.m.
Corporate Parenting Panel	5.00 p.m.
Cardiff Bay Advisory	5.00 p.m.
Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs	6.00 p.m.
LA Governors	10.00 a.m.

**STATISTICS FOR HYBRID SCRUTINY MEETINGS FROM DECEMBER 2023 - MAY 2024 MEMBERS PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER AND TOTAL YOUTUBE VIEWS (BOTH LIVE AND POST MEETING VIEWS)**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Committee Members in Chamber</b>	<b>Non Committee Members in Chamber</b>	<b>Public Speakers in Chamber</b>	<b>Total You Tube Views</b>
<b>Corporate Performance and Resources (11 Members)</b>	13.12.23	2			115
	17.01.24	5			126
	15.02.24	3			109
	21.02.24	3			112
	20.03.24	4			136
	17.04.24	4	1		144
	24.04.24	3			126
	22.05.24	3			54
<b>Environment and Regeneration (11 Members)</b>	12.12.23	2	1		74
	16.01.24	3			79
	13.02.24	2	1		139
	20.02.24	2	1		120
	12.03.24	2	1		138
	16.04.24	3	3	1	191
	21.05.24	3			100

<b>Healthy Living and Social Care (12 Members)</b>		05.12.23	2		1				101
		09.01.24	2		1				73
		06.02.24	2		2				49
		05.03.24	3						53
		02.04.24	4		4		4		185
		14.05.24	3						67
		24.05.24	3		3				31
<b>Homes and Safe Communities (11 Members plus 2 vacancies and 5 non voting observers)</b>		06.12.23	5 (including 3 tenant reps)		1				101
		10.01.24	3						109
		07.02.24	2		2				73
		04.03.24	2						132
		10.04.24	2		1				98
		15.05.24	2						113
<b>Learning and Culture (12 Members plus 5 co-opted Members, 10 non voting observers - 5 of which are vacant)</b>		07.12.23	3		1				130
		11.01.24	3		2				371
		08.02.24	6 (including 3 non voting reps)		1				109
		18.03.24	5 (including 3 non voting reps)						81
		11.04.24	4		1				84