Hybrid meeting protocol – interim arrangements

Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

i. Adopt the draft hybrid meeting protocol on an interim basis until the review of Standing Orders is concluded; and

ii. Approve the phased implementation plan for hybrid meetings as outlined in sections 3.5 to 3.7.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

This report outlines the proposed approach to hybrid meetings of Council and its Committees and presents a draft hybrid meeting protocol for approval.

Wednesday 19 April 2023

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3   Background/Main Body of Report

3.1   At its meeting of 30 November 2022, Council approved the installation of video conferencing technology to enable hybrid meetings of Council and its Committees. This installation is now complete.

3.2   To ensure that Council continues to comply with its governance framework, the need for a hybrid working protocol has been identified. Discussions are ongoing with other Local Authorities that use video-conferencing for their governance meetings; to learn from their experiences. This includes exploring alternative arrangements for online voting.

3.3   The hybrid working protocol is intended to guide members to chair and participate effectively in meetings of Council and its Committees that are delivered through video conferencing, ensuring that Standing Orders, the Scheme of Delegation and Scheme of Administration are adhered to.

3.4   As the Council is currently undertaking a review of Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and Scheme of Administration, it is proposed that the hybrid meeting protocol is treated as draft (Appendix B) and adopted for an interim period, until the review of Standing Orders and associated Scheme(s) has concluded. It is anticipated that this will be in Q3 2023/24, at which time a final hybrid working protocol will be presented to Council for consideration and approval; alongside the revised Standing Orders and associated Scheme(s).

Implementation plan

3.5   As per the Standing Orders, the Council has a Cabinet and the following principal Committees, appointed in terms of Section 57 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- Council
- Cabinet
- Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee
- Audit Committee
- Planning Committee
- General Purposes Committee
- Local Review Body
- Police and Fire and Rescue Board
- Appeals Committee
- Standards Committee
- Petitions Committee
- Community Asset Transfer Committee
- Community Asset Transfer Review Committee

3.6   It is proposed to introduce the video-conferencing functionality on a phased approach to ensure that learning can be captured and the appropriate support can be provided to all participants. From the date of this report to the Summer recess (end June 2023), the following meetings would be held adopting the hybrid working protocol:

- Council
- Cabinet
- Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee
- Audit Committee
- Community Asset Transfer Committee
- Community Asset Transfer Review Committee

3.7   It is proposed that the following meetings will continue to meet either virtually or in-person (at the discretion of the Chair) until the Summer recess; and then move to hybrid from August 2023 onwards:

- Planning Committee
- General Purposes Committee
- Local Review Body
- Police and Fire and Rescue Board
- Appeals Committee
- Standards Committee
- Petitions Committee

3.8   The draft hybrid working protocol and phased implementation approach have been considered by the first meeting of the Cross Party Standing Orders Working Group and recommended for Council approval today.

4   Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1   Resource

Financial implications relating to the installation of the video-conferencing technology was agreed at the Council meeting of December 2022. There are no additional financial implications associated with the adoption of the hybrid working protocol.

4.2   Digital

No implications other than those outlined in the report presented to Council in December 2022.

4.3   Risk

The use of video conferencing is a new approach for the Council to conduct its governance business. If Council do not adopt a hybrid working protocol, there is a risk that business may not be competent as

the protocol provides a framework to ensure that meetings comply with Standing Orders and associated Scheme(s).

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Video conferencing enables meetings to be held using a hybrid approach. This widens the accessibility for participants and increases the transparency of decision making for communities through the live streaming of these meetings.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications
Appendix B – Draft Hybrid Working Protocol

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1   Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The decisions of the Council and its Committees are made under consideration of the contribution to delivery of all of the key priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan.

A.2   Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

☐ Holistic Working
☐ Hub and Spoke
☒ Modern
☒ Sustainable
☒ Transformational
☐ Preventative
☐ Asset-based
☒ Continuous Improvement
☐ One size fits one
☐ None of the above

A.3   Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

☐ One Council Working with you, for you
☐ Preventative and Sustainable
☒ Efficient and Modern
☒ Innovative and Ambitious
☐ None of the above

A.4   Delivering Best Value

No negative impact identified.

A.5   Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

No negative impact identified.

A.6   Impact on Performance and Outcomes

No negative impact identified.

A.7   Adopting a Preventative Approach

No negative impact identified.

A.8   Supporting Sustainable Development

No negative impact identified.