

## **Webcasting Meetings of Council and its Committees**

### **Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director - Place**

#### **Report for Decision**

#### **1 Recommendation**

Council is requested to consider the range of its public governance meetings which are broadcast and live streamed, and to direct officers to implement one of the three options as set out in this report.

#### **2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary**

Special Council held on 27 September 2022 decided to proceed with an in-person Council meeting of 4 October 2022 and thereafter the range of public governance meetings for Council, Cabinet and its established Committees. For this schedule of meetings, these have been live streamed or recorded for available broadcast to members of the public. Council are asked to consider the current arrangements and determine what the interim broadcasting approach should be whilst awaiting the implementation of a technical solution for hybrid meetings, anticipated by March 2023.

**Date: 28 October 2022**

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### 3 Background

At its Special Council meeting on 27 September 2022, Council agreed to reconvene Council, Cabinet and established Committees in-person. Up until this point, from June 2020, meetings of Council and its Committees were held virtually using the MS Teams platform due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.1** Prior to the pandemic, some in-person meetings held in the Council chamber were webcast and/or recorded to allow the public to watch live or view after the meeting (Council and Planning). The number of meetings webcast was limited due to the arrangements with the webcasting supplier, which meant that to webcast all meetings would have exceeded the number of streaming hours included in the contract.
- 3.2** During the pandemic, when meetings were held via MS Teams, the majority of the meetings were also live video broadcast to members of the public.

#### **Current arrangements for consideration**

- 3.3** Following Council's decision on 27 September 2022 to return to in-person meetings for all Council, Cabinet and established Committees, all meetings have been webcast from the Council chamber. This is a change from pre-COVID arrangements as the contract with the webcasting supplier has been renegotiated and there is now increased streaming hours capacity.
- 3.4** Council are asked to consider whether this revised arrangement should continue, or if some meetings should not be webcast. Options are set out below.

#### **Option 1: to continue with the current arrangements in that all in-person governance meetings should be webcast:**

- Council
- Cabinet
- Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee
- Planning Committee
- Audit Committee
- General Purposes Committee
- Local Review Body

#### **Option 2: to revert to the previous arrangements pre-pandemic:**

- Council
- Planning

#### **Option 3: to discount both options 1 and 2 and propose a list of meetings that should be webcast.**

**3.5** It should be noted that any decision above does not apply to Integration Joint Board meetings who have their own arrangements nor the Midlothian Police and Fire & Rescue Board.

**3.6** The above options are interim measures. Council on 4 October 2022 has endorsed the implementation of hybrid meetings. This was on the basis that the implementation costs associated with the revised proposed technical solution were significantly less than those reported to Council earlier in the calendar year. However it was noted at that meeting that implementation may take until March 2023 subject to availability of supplies for installation.

#### **4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital, Risk and Equalities)**

##### **4.1 Resource**

There are no additional resource requirements as the contract allows for increased webcasting hours.

##### **4.2 Digital**

There are no additional digital requirements as the technical solution is available and in use.

##### **4.3 Risk**

There is a risk that the Council does not meet its obligations for public access where meetings are not broadcast or made available to the public.

##### **4.4 Ensuring Equalities**

Equality implications continue to be assessed as part of the hybrid implementation and any mitigations necessary would be carried out as part of the detailed work to design the implementation of the systems layout.

##### **4.5 Additional Report Implications**

**See Appendix A**

## APPENDIX A – Additional Report Implications

### A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The route map through and out of the crisis approved in June 2020 outlines the phases of service recovery and transformation which underpin delivery of 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

The report aims to deliver best value.

### A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The focus to date has been on identifying a technical solution including consultation with other Councils. No wider consultation has been undertaken.

### A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The arrangements for meetings of Council and its Committees facilitates the governance to determine outcomes and policies and also the scrutiny of performance and the delivery of outcomes.

### A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The report considers the facilitation of meetings of Council and its Committees the business of which encompasses the adoption of preventative approaches.

### A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

New systems can be assessed to consider energy management and utility consumption alongside consideration of the wider building ownership implications.

**Background papers:**

1. [Council on 14 December 2021 Hybrid Meetings of Council and its Committees](#)
2. [Council on 24 May 2022, Hybrid Meetings of Council and its Committee](#)