
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

27 October 2021

North Ayrshire Council

Title: Hybrid Committee Meetings Pilot

Purpose:

To update the Council on the hybrid committee meetings pilot in October 2021.

Recommendation:

That the Council agrees to:

- (a) note the outcome of the hybrid meetings pilot;
- (b) extend the pilot of Licensing Committee and Integration Joint Board hybrid meetings until the next Council meeting, subject to:
 - (i) consultation with the Health and Social Care Partnership with regard to the IJB arrangements;
 - (ii) hybrid meetings during the next stage of the pilot proceeding as “remote meetings (with physical participation)”, with no more than 50% of committee Members attending in person and on the basis that any failure of the hybrid equipment would result in the meeting reverting to a remote platform;
 - (iii) amendment of the hybrid meetings protocol set out at Appendix 1, to accommodate physical attendance by external parties in exceptional circumstances, as determined by officers;
 - (iv) the pilot being suspended in the event of a reintroduction of social distancing requirements; and
 - (v) the extent of the pilot being dependent on the availability of sufficient staff resources
- (c) receive a report on the outcome of the extended pilot thereafter.

1 Executive Summary

- 12 As a result of COVID-19 and associated restrictions, meetings of the Council and its committees have been continuing to meet on a wholly remote basis via MS Teams, with any meetings which would ordinarily been open to the public being live-streamed to the Council’s webcasting microsite.

- 1.3 At its meeting on 8 September 2021, the Council agreed to undertake a hybrid committee meetings pilot in September/October 2021, which would allow up to 50% of committee members to attend in person, with the remainder joining the meeting remotely via MS Teams. The Licensing Committee and Integration Joint Board were selected for inclusion in the pilot. A protocol was developed by officers to guide the implementation of the hybrid meetings pilot.
- 1.4 Licensing Committee and the Integration Joint Board meeting took place on a hybrid basis on 20 October and 21 October, respectively, the September 2021 Licensing Committee having been cancelled due to lack of business. Learning from the pilot is set out in this report, together with recommendations for an extension to the pilot.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 8 September 2021, the Council received an update report on progress in terms of the introduction of hybrid meetings.
- 2.2 The Council agreed as follows:
- (a) that a hybrid meetings pilot take place prior to the next ordinary meeting of the Council in October 2021, involving a meeting(s) of the Licensing Committee and Integration Joint Board, subject to:
 - (i) consultation with the Health and Social Care Partnership with regard to the IJB arrangements,
 - (ii) any applicants/licence-holders attending the Licensing Committee do so on a remote basis only;
 - (iii) any hybrid meetings during the pilot proceeding as remote meetings (with physical participation) with no more than 50% of committee Members attending in person and on the basis that any failure of the hybrid equipment would result in the meeting reverting to a remote platform;
 - (iv) the pilot being suspended in the event of a reintroduction of social distancing requirements; and
 - (v) the extent of the pilot being dependent on the availability of sufficient staff resources
 - (b) to note that no further amendment to Standing Orders is required at this time in relation to hybrid meeting arrangements, but that officers use learning from the pilot to inform a Hybrid Meetings protocol for use by Members, Officers and other meeting participants;
 - (c) that a further report be submitted to the Council meeting in October 2021 on:
 - (i) the outcome of the pilot;
 - (ii) options for the expansion of hybrid/physical meetings and
 - (iii) future public gallery provisions; and
 - (d) to note that any pilot hybrid meetings held in September 2021 would not require to include a physical public gallery but that, from October 2021, some public gallery provision would be needed for any meetings with a physical attendance component.

Hybrid Meetings Protocol

- 23 The protocol set out at Appendix 1 to the report was developed by officers to provide background information on the principles and features of hybrid meetings; guide their operation during the pilot; and clarify the position in the event of a hybrid system or other failure. It is proposed that, subject to revision to accommodate learning from learning from the pilot, this document should continue to guide the operation of hybrid meetings.

Hybrid Equipment Testing

- 24 Extensive testing of the hybrid equipment in the Council Chambers took place in September and October to confirm the reliability of the system; rehearse the implementation of contingency arrangements in the event of equipment failure; gauge the staff resource required to run a hybrid meeting; and consider arrangements around issues such as presentations and the operation of hearings.
- 25 Testing demonstrated that the system appeared reliable but that significant additional staffing resource is required to manage a hybrid meeting when compared with a wholly physical or even a wholly remote meeting.

Council Chambers Arrangements

- 26 For both meetings in the hybrid pilot, arrangements were made to ensure that the seating plans for the Chambers provided adequate social distancing. Physical attendees were required to wear a face covering when not seated and hand sanitiser was available on entry to the building. The Chambers itself was also the subject of thorough cleaning before and after the meeting and open windows and doors provided suitable ventilation.
- 27 In accordance with the protocol, physical attendees were also asked to bring a device with them for use should the meeting have to revert to a wholly remote format via MS Teams.

Hybrid Pilot: Licensing Committee (20 October 2021)

- 28 Members of the Licensing Committee were invited to advise the clerk a week prior to the meeting whether they wished to attend in person. There were three requests (from Councillors McNicol (Chair), Barr and Donald L. Reid) in addition to the Solicitor (Licensing). The remaining Elected Members, together with invited applicants/licence-holders and officers, attended remotely via MS Teams.
- 29 Due to the nature of the business under consideration, the Committee resolved to exclude the press and public and, therefore, no physical public gallery was required in the Council Chambers, nor was the meeting live-streamed.
- 210 Three Committee Services Officers were required to manage the meeting: one undertook a traditional clerking role in the Chambers, a second operated the hybrid equipment, and a third joined via MS Teams (to assist with admitting parties to hearings at the appropriate time and ensure they had left prior to the committee's deliberation, as well as noting remote attendance and monitoring the 'hands up' function and 'chat box' as a precaution).

- 211 The hybrid meeting operated successfully, with remote and physical attendees able to see and hear each other.

Hybrid Pilot: Integration Joint Board (21 October 2021)

- 212 Similarly, Members of the Integration Joint Board were requested to advise in advance if they wished to attend in person. One member attended the meeting in person. The remaining members of the Integration Joint Board and supporting officers attended remotely via MS Teams.
- 213 Again, three members of the Committee Services team were required to support the meeting, as described at 2.10 above.
- 214 In the case of the IJB, as the meeting would ordinarily be open to the public, a small public gallery was provided and any members of the press or public interested in attending the Chambers were invited to do so by prior arrangement. No public gallery requests were received. Arrangements were also made to live-stream the meeting to the Council's webcasting microsite.
- 215 A technical fault prevented the hybrid system from running Microsoft Teams immediately prior to the start of the IJB meeting. This may have been related to an unexpected Teams update by Microsoft. The matter now appears to have been resolved, but it was not possible to proceed with the hybrid IJB meeting at the time. The established contingency arrangement - whereby the physical attendee joined remotely - was implemented very quickly and the meeting proceeded successfully on a wholly remote basis via MS Teams.

Learning Points

- 216 While there was insufficient time to fully survey remote and physical attendees, contact was made immediately following the meetings and this is summarised at Section 5.1. The main learning points observed by officers, taking into account Elected Member feedback, are highlighted below:

Reliability

- 217 Extensive testing of the hybrid system in advance of the pilot provided reassurance as to its reliability. However, as was demonstrated by the IJB pilot meeting, there is an inherent vulnerability in any system which relies upon technology. This is particularly the case where the solution involves integrating software and equipment from multiple providers.
- 218 A continuation of the hybrid meetings pilot will allow a better gauge of reliability. There are suitable contingency arrangements in place (i.e. reverting to wholly remote) in the event of a failure and it was possible to test these during the IJB meeting.
- 219 If hybrid meetings are to become established practice in future, there is an argument for seeking a more integrated corporate system covering live-streaming/webcasting software, screens and microphones.

Room Temperature

- 220 The pilot demonstrated that room temperature may be an issue for hybrid meetings during COVID-19, if air conditioning cannot be used and additional ventilation is necessary. Clearly, this is likely to have a particular impact for longer meetings during winter months.
- 221 Although COVID-19 health and safety compliance must take precedence over usual minimum temperatures for a working environment, the comfort of attendees is relevant and there is concern about the impact on clerks attempting to take manual or electronic notes if room temperature is lower than normally considered reasonable.
- 222 Section 4 includes more information on the regulatory background to the question of room temperature, including a reference to recently updated guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment process in light of this, it may be possible to reinstate the Chambers air conditioning. Failing that, alternative arrangements, informed by the risk assessment process, will be considered.

Confidentiality

- 223 Where a committee, such as Licensing, resolves to exclude the press and public to allow consideration of exempt information as defined by Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, there is a potential confidentiality issue associated with the current requirement to have windows open in the Council Chambers. This is, therefore, noted as a risk.

Staffing Resource

- 224 Hybrid meetings require a significant staff resource when compared with wholly physical or even wholly remote committee meetings. As described in 2.10 above, three officers are currently needed to service each a hybrid committee meeting. The Committee Services team comprises four officers, all of whom have other duties in addition to administering committees and one of whom also supports election preparations.

Participation by External Parties

- 225 For the purpose of the pilot and in recognition of COVID-19 restrictions, physical attendance at hybrid meetings was open only to a limited number of Elected Members and officers. The protocol provided that external parties, including applicants/licence-holders attending Licensing Committee hearings, should be asked to join the meeting remotely. This is in part for practical reasons, since any failure of the hybrid equipment would see the meeting reconvene on a wholly remote basis and, therefore, external parties may need access to MS Teams.
- 226 Although there have been no significant issues around external parties joining wholly remote meetings over the past year or more, it is recognised that there may be some exceptions where applicants/licence-holders, appellants or others do not have access to a device.

227 It may be possible to accommodate such exceptional cases by liaising with the relevant Service to establish if an officer might be available to support the individual with a device. This would allow them to attend in person, with a contingency in place in the event of the meeting reconvening remotely. However, this would not be intended to allow wholesale physical attendance by external parties. During COVID-19, physical attendance by external parties would be by exception only.

Added Value

228 The potential of the hybrid equipment to add value to meetings of the Council and its committees is clear, in terms of accommodating the desire of some Elected Members to return to physical attendance at meetings while offering flexibility for others to attend remotely. Indeed, as Section 5.1 reflects, the hybrid meeting format was generally positively received by both the Elected Members who participated in the pilot as physical attendees and those who joined remotely.

229 The requirement for public gallery provision for physical and/or hybrid meetings also addresses potential accessibility issues for members of the public and other external parties who are unable to access a live-stream and who might wish to view proceedings in person.

230 However, it should be noted that the two hybrid meetings which have taken place to date during the pilot attracted only limited Elected Member interest for physical attendance and no requests from members of the public to attend. An extension of the pilot may allow a better opportunity to gauge the added value for Elected Members and the public. However, if COVID-19 case numbers rise over the winter, this may further reduce interest in physical attendance.

231 In the longer term, post-COVID, it might be argued that hybrid meetings are likely to demonstrate their real value when it is possible for meetings to return to a predominately physical format. In such circumstances, hybrid meetings would offer an opportunity to address real issues, such as travel disruption, poor weather and physical impairment.

3. Proposals

3.1 The Council is invited to:

- (a) note the outcome of the hybrid meetings pilot;
- (b) agree to extend the pilot of Licensing Committee and Integration Joint Board hybrid meetings until the next Council meeting, subject to:
 - (i) consultation with the Health and Social Care Partnership with regard to the IJB arrangements;
 - (ii) consultation with Chairs on the meetings to be included in the next stage of the pilot;

- (iii) hybrid meetings during the next stage of the pilot proceeding as “remote meetings (with physical participation)”, with no more than 50% of committee Members attending in person and on the basis that any failure of the hybrid equipment would result in the meeting reverting to a remote platform;
 - (iv) amendment of the draft hybrid meetings protocol set out at Appendix 1, to accommodate physical attendance by external parties in exceptional circumstances, as determined by officers;
 - (v) the pilot being suspended in the event of a reintroduction of social distancing requirements; and
 - (vi) the extent of the pilot being dependent on the availability of sufficient staff resources
- (c) receive a report on the outcome of the extended pilot thereafter.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 Prior to COVID-19, the Council webcast only meetings of the Council, Integration Joint Board, but it is assumed that even following the relaxation of restrictions and the reintroduction of a physical public gallery, live-streaming of all remote and hybrid meeting which are not subject to the exclusion of the press and public will be expected as a matter of course. Additional webcasting hours have been purchased to accommodate this in the interim and this can be built into the retendering exercise for webcasting with effect from June 2022.
- 4.2 Remote meetings have significantly reduced expenditure on Elected Member travel. The resumption of physical attendance will increase such costs.

Human Resources

- 4.3 Remote/hybrid meetings are more resource-intensive than physical meetings, particularly where physical meetings are not webcast. The Committee Services team comprises four Committee Services Officers. Each hybrid meeting requires the support of three CSOs.

Legal

Room Temperature/Working Conditions

- 4.4 The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 lay down particular requirements for most aspects of the working environment and Regulation 7 deals specifically with the temperature in indoor workplaces, stating that “During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable.” Although the law does not state a minimum or maximum temperature for working environments, the temperature would normally be expected to be at least 16°C (or 13°C if much of the work involves rigorous physical effort).

- 4.5 However, COVID-19 brings exceptional circumstances and, as there is the possibility of more harm occurring from COVID-19 than cooler air, closing the windows during meetings in the Council Chambers to bring the room to what might be considered a more reasonable temperature, has not been permitted.
- 4.6 Recently updated guidance from the HSE indicates that air-conditioning systems may be suitable for use where other mitigating measures to ensure adequate fresh air are in place. Each location will require to be risk assessed and solutions will be specific to individual circumstances. Corporate Health and Safety and Property Management and Investment are currently reviewing what measures will be applicable and in what circumstances.
- 4.7 Once the Council Chambers risk assessment has been reviewed in light of the updated guidance, it may be possible to reinstate the air conditioning, subject to suitable mitigation.

Remote and Hybrid Meetings

- 4.6 The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 permits the holding of and participation in remote meetings. The Council's Standing Orders were varied using the Chief Executive's urgency powers to mirror the terms of the Act and facilitate the holding of remote and/or hybrid meetings. [The Standing Orders relating to the Integration Joint Board already include a general provision which encompasses remote or hybrid meetings]. In terms of Section 43(2) of the 2003 Act, the decision on whether a meeting is remote or hybrid is for the Provost or relevant committee Chair and the report, therefore, recommends that officers liaise with Chairs regarding the meetings to be included in the pilot.

Public Gallery Provision

- 4.7 Part 4 of schedule 6 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 contains temporary modifications to Section 50A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 by adding an additional ground for the exclusion of the public from meetings of Local Authorities where there would be a "real or substantial risk" to public health due to infection or contamination with coronavirus. There is no distinction between virtual and physical Local Authority meetings within the temporary grounds (although it is difficult, of course, to make the case that there would be a 'real or substantial risk' associated with the public attending a remote meeting).
- 4.8 The temporary power to exclude the public from Local Authority meetings on coronavirus grounds was enforceable under Part 1 of the 2020 Act. Parts of the Act, including this power, expired on 30 September. It is understood that the Scottish Government is preparing further primary legislation although the terms of this are currently unknown. It is the view of the Council's Legal service that, by streaming its Teams meetings to the Council's website, the Council is effectively admitting the public to its remote meetings.
- 4.9 Whilst live streaming of remote meetings is likely to constitute public access to a meeting of the Council or its committees held on a wholly remote basis, it is logical to assume that the resumption of physical meetings or the introduction of hybrid meetings should include some public gallery provision even if live streaming continues.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.10 In the absence of a physical public gallery provision, some members of the public without IT equipment are disadvantaged by not being able to observe the proceedings, albeit that hard-copy Agendas and Minutes continue to be available on request. The reintroduction of a physical public gallery as part of the hybrid pilot addresses this.
- 4.11 At the same time, there may be some equalities advantages associated with live-streaming meetings of the Council and committees in terms of offering easier/more extensive access to meetings than would be afforded by a small public gallery.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.12 Reintroducing a physical attendance element to meetings of the Council and its committees would have a small negative impact associated with travel to and from meetings.
- 4.13 Similarly, there will be some negative impact in the event that additional heating is required within the Chambers while windows are open.

Key Priorities

- 4.14 None arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.15 None arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 In normal circumstances, a survey of hybrid meeting participants would have been carried out following the pilot. However, the timing of the meetings in close proximity to the Council has meant that there has been less of an opportunity to undertake formal consultation.
- 5.2 Informal feedback from the Licensing Committee meeting, however, suggests that the hybrid arrangements were generally positively received by both remote and physical attendees. Physical attendees welcomed the opportunity to attend the meeting in person and expressed a desire for meetings to return to the Chambers. In particular, the Chair valued the access to legal and IT advice which was afforded by physical attendance. (This support could potentially be offered outwith the hybrid format by arranging for the Chair and relevant officer(s) to join the remote meeting from Cunninghame House, per the arrangements for full Council).
- 5.3 A remote attendee acknowledged the success of the hybrid meeting in allowing some Members to attend in person, but personally expressed a wish to continue to participate remotely for the time being. There was also an observation about an instance of apparent discussion in the Chambers which was inaudible to remote attendees; however, this did not relate to any failure of the system and this matter can be resolved in future by prompting physical attendees to use their microphones when addressing the meeting.

- 5.4 Although the IJB meeting did not proceed using the hybrid platform, it was observed by a physical attendee that the low temperature in the room may be an issue.
- 5.5 Consultation has also taken place with colleagues within Legal Services and Corporate Health and Safety with regard to Section 4 of the report.

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Background Papers

Informal consultation responses from pilot meeting participants

Information from Property Management and Investment with regard to HSE guidance



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Protocol for Hybrid Committee Meetings Pilot:
(Combined Physical &
Microsoft Teams Attendance)

Committee & Member Services
North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame House, Irvine KA12 8EE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2020, in light of the COVID-19 and Government advice in relation to the pandemic, scheduled meetings of the Council and its committees were initially cancelled.
- 1.2 In June 2020, the Chief Executive, following consultation, under the Council's Emergency Governance arrangements agreed the resumption from September 2020 of committee meetings on a wholly remote basis via Microsoft Teams, with recordings of any meetings normally open to the public initially to be uploaded onto the Council's website following each meeting. Officers then introduced an IT solution to address the issue of live-streaming MS Teams meetings. From October 2020, all meetings which would ordinarily be open to the public have been live-streamed.
- 1.3 The introduction of remote MS Teams committee meetings was supported by the development of meeting protocols to assist Elected Members (and, specifically Chairs), Officers and members of the public attending remote hearings, etc.
- 1.4 Hybrid meeting equipment has now been installed in the Council Chambers. This works with the Council's existing webcasting equipment to combine physical attendees in the Chambers and remote attendees joining the meeting via a remote meeting platform (such as MS Teams) to create a blended/hybrid meeting.
- 1.5 This guidance has been prepared to support a pilot of hybrid meetings which will take place in September/October.

2. The Principles of Hybrid Meetings

- 2.1 There are three potential components to a hybrid meeting:

Physical Attendees participate in the usual way using their Council Chambers microphones. They are able to view/hear remote attendees via the television screens and audio system in the Chambers.

Remote Attendees join the meeting via an MS Teams link. They see a wide shot of the Council Chambers and can see/hear individual speakers when they operate their microphones.

Live Streaming the new hybrid equipment offers the option of live streaming a blended/hybrid meeting to the Council's webcasting microsite, where it can be viewed live or after the event. Depending on the legislative context, this can be in lieu of a public gallery or as an enhancement to it, to allow a wider audience to view the proceedings

3. Physical Attendees

- 3.1** During the hybrid meetings pilot, physical attendance will be restricted to 50% of the membership of the committee and those attending in person will be determined in advance of the meeting. Preference will be given to the Chair (in whose absence, the Vice-Chair).
- 3.2** Where requests to attend in person out-number the available places for physical attendees, Committee Services will liaise with the Chair to determine which Members, officers and others may join from the Council Chambers. **No meeting participant should present themselves at the Council Chambers except by prior arrangement.**
- 3.3** Physical attendees should use their microphone when addressing the meeting (at the invitation of the Chair). It is also important to switch the microphone off after speaking. Operation of the hybrid meeting equipment depends upon the system correctly identifying speakers in the Chambers using a pre-selected seating plan. **Therefore, it is important that physical attendees use the seats which have been assigned.** These will be indicated by nameplates. A minimum of **1m social distancing** will apply.
- 3.4** Physical attendees must follow any COVID-19 guidance in place at the time. This may include the wearing of **face coverings** unless addressing the meeting. Physical attendees should also be aware that **additional ventilation** may be required and dress appropriately, particularly in colder weather.
- 3.5** In the event of a hybrid equipment failure during the pilot phase, the Chair will reconvene the meeting as a remote meeting on Microsoft Teams. Physical attendees must ensure, therefore, that they bring their **laptop or other device** to allow them to access the meeting remotely if necessary. If requested to do so, physical attendees should follow the original MS Teams meeting link (unless a decision is taken to reconvene the meeting at a different time). Please note that it may be necessary for those in the Council Chambers to move elsewhere in the building prior to joining the MS Teams meeting in order to avoid sound feedback/interference caused by multiple devices on the system in close proximity.
- 3.6** During the pilot phase, some external parties (including applicants and licence-holders) may be advised by Committee Services not to attend in person but to join the meeting at the appropriate time as remote participants (via Microsoft Teams).

4. Remote Attendees

- 4.1** Remote attendees will join the meeting using the Microsoft Teams link contained in the meeting invitation. Arrangements for joining the meeting remotely will be as detailed in the Remote Committee Meetings Protocol: Microsoft Teams.

- 4.2** As with a wholly remote meeting, loss of broadband connection or a technical issue affecting an individual remote attendee will not prevent the hybrid meeting from proceeding providing it is otherwise quorate. (Further information is available later in this document to cover system failure affecting the hybrid equipment itself).
- 4.3** Remote attendees should avoid use of the **chat box** during the meeting as this will not be visible to physical attendees in the Council Chambers. (Subject to the availability of staff resources, a member of the Committee Services team will join the meeting remotely to monitor the **chat box** but this may not always be possible). Any remote attendee wishing to attract the Chair's attention should do so using the **hand up** function.
- 4.4** Please refer to the Remote Committee Meetings Protocol: Microsoft Teams for other general information on participating in formal meetings via MS Teams.

5. Sederunt

- 5.1** At the start of the meeting, the Clerk will take the **sederunt** and, in confirming they are present, physical attendees should indicate whether they are attending in the Chambers or remotely. This will allow the Minute of the meeting to reflect accurately which Members and officers attended "in the Chambers" and which joined the meeting "remotely".

6. Public Gallery

- 6.1** Where **public gallery** provision is legally required for a hybrid meeting during the pilot, the size of the public gallery will be limited to **two or three** places.
- 6.2** Face coverings must be worn and a minimum of **1m social distancing** will apply. Any other COVID-19 guidance in force at the time (including contact tracing arrangements) will apply.
- 6.3** Public gallery attendance will be by prior arrangement by contacting committeeservices@north-ayrshire.gov.uk. Demand may exceed available public gallery places; however, access to meetings which would otherwise be open to the public to attend will continue to be achieved via live-streaming of the proceedings.

7. Powerpoint Presentations

- 7.1** Please note that it is not possible for Powerpoint presentations to be made to hybrid meetings in the same way that they would to a traditional, purely physical meeting. This is because the screens in the Chambers will also be used to display remote attendees.

- 7.2** Presentations to hybrid meetings can only be made by a remote attendee sharing their screen. This means that, even if the officer/external party making a presentation is attending in person, they must make arrangements for another person to join the meeting remotely and share the presentation from their screen. The presenter within the Chambers will then need to indicate to the remote attendee when the presentation can be moved on to the next slide.
- 7.3** Because presentations will require additional set-up on the hybrid meeting system, it is important that officers/external parties provide Committee Services with **advance notice** of any presentations one week prior to the meeting. A copy of the presentation slides should also be provided to committeeservices@north-ayrshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

8. Motions and Amendments

- 8.1** Please note that it is not possible for motions or amendments to be displayed on screen in the same way as they would for a traditional, purely physical meeting. This is because the screens in the Chambers will also be used to display remote attendees.
- 8.2** Any motion or amendment which requires to be displayed should be emailed to committeeservices@north-ayrshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting, where possible, or otherwise as it arises during the meeting. A member of the Committee Services team attending on a remote basis will then share their screen at the appropriate time.
- 8.3** In necessary, the Chair may call for a short recess to allow the motion/amendment to be displayed to remote and physical attendees.

9. Hybrid System Failure

- 9.1** The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 permits the holding of and participation in remote meetings/meetings with a remote component and the Council's Standing Orders have already been amended to mirror the terms of the Act. Members who attend a remote meeting of Council/its committees are regarded as 'present'. The MS Teams Committee Meetings Protocol clarifies that any loss of connection during a meeting is not sufficient to prevent an otherwise quorate meeting from proceeding. So, if an individual Member drops out of a remote meeting due to a failure of their device or a broadband issue, this is treated in the same way as if they had left the room during a physical meeting.

- 9.2** Hybrid meetings are potentially more problematic. Here, the issue might be one of a complete hybrid system failure rather than a connection issue affecting an individual participant. In this scenario, there may be some Members within the Chambers ready to participate in the meeting and other Members who have successfully joined via MS Teams, but a technical issue with the hybrid system results in a failure to combine the two elements into a single meeting. Effectively there are now two meetings, each of which could be quorate. Although we do expect the hybrid equipment to operate reliably, provision needs to be made to dealing with such a situation, however unlikely.
- 9.3** In terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, the Chair of a meeting can determine whether a meeting takes place on a remote (or hybrid basis). In addition, Standing Order 5.7 includes a provision for the Provost/Chair to “determine any questions of procedure for which no express provision has been made in these Standing Orders”. This means that, following consultation with the Chair, the Committee Services team can respond to any failure of the hybrid meeting equipment in the most appropriate manner.
- 9.4** For instance, the hybrid meeting may be rescheduled as a wholly remote meeting via MS Teams while most meeting participants (including the officers presenting reports) are still remote but, in future, the decision may be to proceed with a physical meeting if the vast majority of attendees are within the Chambers and only one or two attendees are remote. In order to ensure that attendees are aware of the position in advance, a hybrid meeting will be designated in advance as either:
- **a Remote Meeting (with physical participation) or**
 - **a Physical Meeting (with remote participation)**
- 9.5** During the pilot phase, all hybrid meetings will be designated as Remote Meetings (with physical participation). This means that, in the event of any failure of the hybrid meeting equipment, the remote format will take precedence. The Chair will adjourn the meeting and the meeting will then reconvene as a remote meeting, with all attendees (including those physical attendees in the Council Chambers) re-joining the meeting via the MS Teams Protocol.
- 9.6** **Please note that, because of the system changes which require to be made to convert from a hybrid meeting to remote, an adjournment of around 20 minutes is required if a hybrid meeting is to take place on a wholly remote basis instead.**
- 9.7** In the future, where most meeting participants are able to attend in person, a hybrid meeting may be designated as a Physical Meeting (with remote participation). In these circumstances, any failure of the hybrid equipment would see the meeting proceed on a wholly physical basis. Remote attendees would be aware of this position in advance when deciding on how to access the meeting.

Document Control Summary:-		
Location:	I:\CEPUBLIC\01 Committee Services\01 Committees&WorkingGroups\00 General\Covid-19 Contingency Planning\Remote Meetings\Protocols	
Last Revised:	Revised By	Nature of Revision
August 2021	MJA	Document created
Sept 2021	MJA	Revised re presentations, sederunt, motion/amendments and public gallery
Oct 2021	MJA	Inclusion of information on adjournment period required to convert a hybrid meeting to wholly remote in the event of system failure