

REPORT TO BUCHAN AREA COMMITTEE – 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

HYBRID MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

- 1.1** The report seeks feedback from the Committee on future arrangements for hybrid meetings with a view to informing the report to Full Council on 29 September on the wider review of hybrid meeting options. In accordance with the decision of Full Council on 23 September 2021, where the Council agreed a Choice Based Blended Model for Fully Virtual and Hybrid Meetings, meeting venues must have a functioning hybrid option for any online attendees. Fully in person meetings would only take place where all participants have chosen to attend in person, creating an in person meeting by default.
- 1.2** In particular the report seeks views from the Committee on what hybrid solution they would wish to see in Buchan House, and also views on the ongoing livestreaming of meetings.
- 1.3 The Committee is recommended to:**
- 1.3.1 Consider and provide comment to Full Council on the future arrangements for hybrid meetings of Buchan Area Committee.**

2 Decision Making Route

- 2.1** The hybrid meeting arrangements for Committee meetings have previously been considered by Full Council, most recently at its meeting on 29 April 2022 ([Item 11](#)).
- 2.2** On 23 September 2021, as the Covid-19 restrictions began to ease, Full Council considered options for hybrid meeting arrangements and agreed to transition to a Choice Based Blended Model for fully virtual and hybrid meetings. In practice, this means that any meeting that is held in a venue must have a hybrid option for virtual attendees. The Model does not allow for fully in person meetings, unless all participants choose to attend in person, thereby creating an in person meeting by default. On 29 April 2022 Full Council agreed to proceed with hybrid upgrades to the Council Chamber and to receive an options appraisal for all other Council venues. In the meantime Committees could agree meeting formats, including the option for hybrid where possible if supported by existing equipment.
- 2.3** This Committee previously expressed a wish to meet in a hybrid format and hybrid meetings have since been held in Buchan House using existing equipment.

- 2.4 Full Council will receive the proposals for future hybrid solutions across Council venues at its meeting on 29 September 2022. Any feedback from the Committee will be provided to the meeting.

3 Discussion

- 3.1 Full Council will consider options for hybrid upgrades across Council venues at its meeting on 29 September 2022. Consultation is therefore being undertaken with Area Committees in advance of that report, seeking feedback as to each Committee's preference for meeting arrangements moving forward.

Hybrid Upgrades

- 3.2 This Committee has expressed a wish to meet in Buchan House in a hybrid format. Presently this can only be facilitated through use of Surface Hubs and existing microphones. It has not yet been possible to achieve a similar solution to that in Committee Room 5, whereby the microphones in the room can connect into the Hub. Feedback has been generally positive on the hybrid meetings held to date in Buchan House, although there have been some issues with the audio quality of meeting recordings.
- 3.3 Hybrid upgrades can range from the installation of new microphones that can connect into the Surface Hub, similar to the solution currently used in Committee Room 5, through to installation of microphones, cameras to track speakers and voting systems, akin to the upgrades currently planned for the Council Chamber. Soft market testing has indicated that the costs of such works can be estimated at up to £30,000 for new microphones and speaker system, and up to £100,000 for a full upgrade with new audio system, cameras to track speakers and voting systems. However it is recognised that each venue is different and there may not therefore be a one size fits all approach. For any hybrid upgrades, the costs would have to be fully explored based on the size and layout of the venue, and efforts would be made to ensure that any new equipment installed would be capable of removal, in the event of a change of meeting venue in future.
- 3.4 There is also of course the option to retain the status quo and continue to make use of Surface Hubs and existing microphones in Buchan House to achieve a hybrid solution.

Livestreaming

- 3.5 Livestreaming of meetings has taken place throughout lockdown where possible. It has been a requirement for online meetings to ensure public access. However with a move to hybrid meetings, public access to meeting venues can resume, in the absence of any coronavirus restrictions. There may therefore no longer be a requirement to livestream meetings, unless these take place fully online, if the public are permitted access. However as no testing has taken place with the movement of the public in and out of the meeting and the impact their attendance may have on the level of background noise being picked up by the surface hub microphones, it is not intended to move back to

face-to-face public attendance in Buchan at this stage. We would therefore continue to live stream when possible

- 3.6 Prior to lockdown, only meetings of Full Council, Policy and Audit Committees were livestreamed using an external provider. Currently meetings are livestreamed through Microsoft Teams Live. This requires an additional officer to manage the live stream during the meeting, allowing the Committee Officer to clerk the meeting. There is therefore an ongoing impact on staffing resources. However it is clear that there are benefits to livestreaming in terms of promoting accessibility to meetings and transparency around Council decision making. Meetings are also recorded and uploaded to YouTube after the meeting.
- 3.7 In light of the move to hybrid arrangements, it is therefore considered appropriate to review the current arrangements for livestreaming at this time and Full Council will be asked to consider the position at its meeting on 29 September 2022.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 This report supports delivery of the Council's Six Priorities by ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place for Committee meetings, and the underlying principle of right people, right places, right time.

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

- 4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is (are) agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			X
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X
Climate Change and Sustainability			X
Health and Wellbeing			X
Town Centre First			X

- 4.3 There are no direct staffing or financial implications directly arising from this report. Full Council will be asked to consider the financial implications of any proposed upgrades at its meeting in September.
- 4.4 An Integrated Impact Assessment process is not required as this report seeks feedback from the Committee on hybrid meeting arrangements and no substantive decisions will arise from the report.
- 4.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level ([Corporate Risk Register](#)):
- ACORP004 – Business and Organisational Transformation
 - ACORP006 – Reputational Management
 - ACORP009 – Operational Risk Management (including health and safety)

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B.1.2 of the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance as it seeks comments from the Committee on matters which impact the Buchan area.

Ritchie Johnson, Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Ruth O'Hare, Legal Service Manager (Governance)

Date 24 August 2022