

ANGUS COUNCIL

11 FEBRUARY 2021

REVIEW OF REMOTE MEETINGS ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This Report advises members of the outcome of a review of remote meetings arrangements and recommends that remote arrangements continue.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council: -

- (i) approves that Council and Committee meetings continue to be held remotely on the current basis; and
- (ii) agrees that these remote arrangements will be reviewed again in 6 months time.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

This Report contributes to the achievement of our priority that the council is efficient and effective as detailed in our Council Plan for 2017 – 2022.

3. BACKGROUND

At the meeting of the Special Arrangements Committee on 23 June 2020 arrangements were put in place to conduct Council meetings remotely, due to the COVID -19 pandemic (Report No 175/20 refers). It was also agreed that these remote meeting arrangements would be reviewed in 6 months' time.

Since that original decision was taken significant steps have been taken to embed the remote meetings as part of the political decision-making processes of the Council and it now works well.

As our technology and know-how has developed, all public sessions of our council and committee meetings are live streamed, with any exempt items being considered by members in private using Microsoft Teams. This has ensured that the public has access to our meetings both in real time and as recordings, providing a greater awareness of our decision- making process. It is very much a positive step both in terms of the Council's Digital Strategy and wider public engagement.

Work is being carried out by officers with IT to move away from the Zoom platform and a full roll out of Microsoft Teams which will then be the sole platform to be used for all meetings.

It is proposed that recordings of meetings will be available only until the final minute of the meeting is agreed and published. Thereafter, recordings will be removed from YouTube and deleted from our records. This ensures compliance with the data protection principle that information, including recordings, should not be kept for any longer than is necessary.

4. PROPOSALS

The current measures in place until at least mid-February including tighter restrictions on movement would not allow physical meetings to take place. It is not known how long these measures will be in place and, even if these specific measures are relaxed to some extent, it is anticipated that social distancing would still be required. As detailed in Report No 175/20, the Council Chambers are not suitable for compliance with current social distancing rules and other potential venues would require to be sufficiently large to accommodate all attendees whilst all

social distancing. However, such other venues are currently being considered for use for vaccination centres.

It is therefore proposed that remote meetings continue on the current basis and that the position be reviewed in six months again.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no increased financial implications associated with this Report. Although the continued support of remote meetings requires an increased staff resource, this is countered by the reduction in travel expenses in attending meetings in person, as well as there being no travel time. It also allows for a reduced carbon footprint.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment is attached.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Donald Macaskill, Manager- Democratic and Members Services
EMAIL DETAILS: Legdem@angus.gov.uk