

ANGUS COUNCIL

22 JUNE 2023

PROTOCOL ON HYBRID MEETINGS

JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval of a protocol for hybrid meetings to assist with the smooth and effective running of such meetings.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Council: -

- (i) approves the Protocol as detailed in Appendix 1 for implementation after the summer recess;
- (ii) delegates authority to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make minor adjustments to the Protocol if required; and
- (iii) notes that a further report will be brought back to a future meeting if a further review of the Protocol is required.

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 2023 – 2028.

3. BACKGROUND

Reference is made to Article 12 of the minute of the meeting of Angus Council held on 8 September 2022 when a solution was agreed for the delivery of hybrid meetings in the existing Chamber at Town and County Hall, Forfar.

That decision was implemented and operational from the Council meeting in March 2023.

4. CURRENT POSITION

In order to assist the efficient and effective running of Council meetings, initial guidance was provided to members to assist during their participation in meetings.

Following a number of hybrid meetings, an analysis has been undertaken thus far and a more detailed Protocol prepared.

5. PROPOSALS

It is proposed that the Protocol at Appendix 1 be formally adopted for implementation at the first meeting following the summer recess.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and 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.

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List of Appendices: Appendix 1 – Proposed Hybrid Meetings Protocol



Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

Step 1

Name of Proposal (includes e. g. budget savings, committee reports, strategies, policies, procedures, service reviews, functions):

Protocol on Hybrid Meetings

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people Yes/No

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics Yes/No

(iii) It is for information only Yes/No

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year Yes/No

(v) It is technical Yes/No

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No

Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment ~~Yes/No~~

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 3

(i)Lead Directorate/Service:

Legal & Democratic Services

(ii)Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? If so, please describe.

Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 – rules around meetings of the Council and Committees.

(iii)What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details.

A protocol for hybrid meetings of Council and Committee to assist with the smooth and effective running of such meetings.

(iv)Is it a new proposal? Yes/~~No~~ Please indicate OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function? Yes/~~No~~ Please indicate

It is a new proposal but, for the purposes of finalising the proposed protocol, a review has been done of the interim guidance issued when hybrid meetings commenced.

Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?

Please indicate all which apply:

Employees Yes/~~No~~

Job Applicants ~~Yes~~/No

Service users ~~Yes~~/No

Members of the public Yes/~~No~~

Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:

Internal data (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).

Experience of how the hybrid meetings have been operating since they commenced in March 2023, including feedback from officers and councillors.

Internal consultation (e.g. with staff, trade unions and any other services affected).

Consultation with relevant staff and with Elected Members

External data (e.g. Census, equality reports, equality evidence finder, performance reports, research, available statistics)

Review of similar protocols operated by other local authorities.

External consultation (e.g. partner organisations, national organisations, community groups, other councils.

n/a

Other (general information as appropriate).

n/a

Step 6: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold? **Yes/No**

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

n/a

Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups? Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.

Age

Impact Positive – the proposed Protocol is intended to support hybrid meetings, which may have a positive impact for older people in terms of improving accessibility and not requiring physical attendance at meetings.

Disability

Impact Positive – the proposed Protocol is intended to support hybrid meetings, which may have a positive impact for those with a disability in terms of improving accessibility and not requiring physical attendance at meetings.

Gender reassignment

Impact Neutral

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact Neutral

Pregnancy/Maternity

Impact the proposed Protocol is intended to support hybrid meetings, which may have a positive impact for those with the protected characteristic of pregnancy/maternity in terms of improving accessibility and not requiring physical attendance at meetings.

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

Impact Neutral

Religion or Belief

Impact Neutral

Sex

Impact Neutral

Sexual orientation

Impact Neutral

Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

n/a

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

The impacts are considered to be positive.

Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?

The impacts are considered to be positive.

Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.

n/a

Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

Hybrid meetings enable greater access for Members, Officers and Members of the Public and the proposed Protocol helps to facilitate these meetings.

Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?

Equalities are being advanced by this proposal.

Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

Links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance.

Step 13(A) What evidence do you have about any socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome in relation to this strategic issue?

Step 13(B) Please state if there are any gaps in socio-economic evidence for this strategy and how you will take measures to gather the evidence you need.

Step 13(C) Are there any potential impacts this strategy may have specifically on the undernoted groupings? Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each grouping.

Low and/or No Wealth (e.g. those with enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.

Impact

Material Deprivation (i.e. those unable to access basic goods and services e.g. repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies).

Impact

Area Deprivation (i.e. where people live (e.g. rural areas), or where they work (e.g. accessibility of transport).

Impact

Socio-economic Background i.e. social class including parents' education, people's employment and income.

Impact

Other – please indicate

Step 13(D) Please state below if there are measures which could be taken to reduce socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome.

n/a

Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?

Regular review of the Protocol by officers at 6-monthly intervals.

Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?

With the report to Council seeking approval of the Protocol.

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Sarah Forsyth, Committee Officer 29.05.23

Reviewed by: Alison Watson, Service Leader – Legal 29.05.23

Approved by: Jackie Buchanan, Director, Legal and Democratic Services

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.
