

FC38. Future Arrangements for Council and Committee Meetings

Council considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an update on future arrangements for Council and Committee meetings and proposed a limited trial of a blended meeting model.

Council was advised in June that there would be engagement with elected members on options for a blended return to physical meetings. Two engagement sessions were held, on 7 and 14 September, which allowed members to take part physically and/or remotely in trial blended meetings. The feedback from the sessions, on both members' views of the appropriateness of returning to physical meetings (whether fully physical or blended) and on the arrangements in place had informed the proposal set out below.

A range of views were expressed in regard to returning to physical meetings – while generally most members would be content to introduce an element of physical participation, there were strong views from some members that a return to physical participation would not be appropriate given the current public health situation. In light of the comments received it was proposed that Council adopt a cautious approach which recognised the spectrum of views held by its elected members. It was proposed therefore that a blended meeting model was introduced for the meetings of the Executive on 19 October and the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 11 November. Physical participation by members would be on a voluntary basis.

Running a limited pilot would also provide officers with the opportunity to further test and refine the arrangements for blended meetings. In the tests so far it had been evident that the current camera had limitations and that an upgraded version would need to be purchased in order to allow remote attendees to see clearly those who were physically participating in the meeting.

A report with further proposals in light of the pilot would be submitted to the meeting of Council on 8 December 2021. All other meetings would continue to be held remotely.

Decision

Council agreed:-

- (1) the proposed arrangements for Council and committee meetings as set out in section 3 of the report, and**
- (2) that the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders, was given authority to suspend the arrangements and revert to the current remote model for public health reasons.**