
Report To:	The Inverclyde Council	Date:	23 September 2021
Report By:	Interim Service Director of Corporate Services & Organisational Recovery	Report No:	FIN/55/21/AP/LA
Contact Officer:	Alan Puckrin	Contact No:	01475 712223
Subject:	Future Delivery of Council/Committee Meetings		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the initial hybrid Committee meetings and thereafter to seek decisions on the future delivery of Council/Committee meetings.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members have received a number of reports over the last 12 months regarding the delivery of Council /Committee and Quasi-Judicial meetings. The most recent report was submitted to the 10 June Council where it was agreed that Officers should develop proposals to move to live streaming of the Council's/Committee meetings and bring a report back outlining any financial and operational implications to the September meeting of the Council.
- 2.2 In July it was agreed, at a meeting of the Strategic Leaders' Forum (SLF), to commence hybrid meetings with effect from the 10 August Policy & Resources Committee. At the time of writing this report there have now been 4 hybrid Committee meetings and the feedback from Elected Members has been largely positive particularly from those in physical attendance but there are occasional audio or connectivity issues for those attending remotely. A protocol for hybrid meetings has been developed by the Interim Head of Legal Services in consultation with Officers involved in the delivery of committee services. A copy of the proposed Hybrid Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules for Committees and Boards is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The majority of officers have continued to attend meetings remotely and this is acknowledged by the CMT to be beneficial in terms of both their time management but also in terms of making it a safer environment for those physically attending meetings. In accordance with the Hybrid Meeting Protocol and Procedure the press and public have the option to physically attend meetings but uptake of this has been very low.
- 2.4 Given the current high level of Covid cases in Inverclyde and to allow for any future situation when the Chair/Convener or Vice Chair/Convenor cannot attend meetings in person, it would be appropriate for the Council to retain fully remote meetings as an option. In light of this the Interim Head of Legal Services has revised the Remote Meeting and Hybrid Meeting Protocol which was approved by the Council at its meeting on 10 June 2020. A copy of the revised Remote Protocol highlighting the main changes is set out at Appendix 2.
- 2.5 Meetings have continued to be recorded, throughout the period hybrid meetings have been held, however these recordings have not been placed on the website for access by the public. The recorded meetings assist with the drafting of the minutes and these recordings are not retained for any longer than they need be. Following discussion at the SLF on 9 September it is proposed to recommence the posting of meetings on the website from today's meeting pending a decision from Members as to whether they would wish meetings to be recorded at all, live streamed or recorded and retrospectively placed on the website for viewing.
- 2.6 Officers have developed costed solutions for Members to consider. Were the Council to instruct

Officers to develop either Option 3 or Option 4 then this will take a number of months to implement during which the current approach would be maintained. Live streaming is technically more challenging to deliver in a professional way and carries a number of legal and reputational risks and would not be recommended by the CMT.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council note the successful implementation of hybrid Committee meetings.
- 3.2 It is recommended that approval be given to all meetings of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Boards continuing to be held on a hybrid basis except in the following situations:
 - a) the Chair/Vice Chair or Convener/Vice-Convener is unable to attend the meeting in person; or
 - b) holding a hybrid meeting would be contrary to the legislation/regulations/guidance of the Scottish Government relating to the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to public health and the requirement for social distancing measures.
- 3.3 After considering the budgetary and other implications it is recommended that the Council decide which options set out in Section 6 officers are to pursue in respect of recording meetings.
- 3.4 It is recommended that the Council approve the Revised Remote Meeting Procedure and Protocols contained in Appendix 2 covering fully remote meetings and the new Protocol for Hybrid Meetings set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.5 It is recommended that the Council note that Officers will continue to investigate how the ventilation and the operation of hybrid meetings within the Council Chambers can be improved.

Alan Puckrin
Interim Service Director of Corporate Services & Organisational Recovery

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Committee/Council meetings where physical attendance was a pre-requisite for participation were suspended in March, 2020. Since then members have received a number of reports over the last 12 months regarding the delivery of Council /Committee and Quasi-Judicial meetings
- 4.2 The most recent report came to the 10 June Council where it was agreed to continue fully remote/recorded meetings whilst social distancing was in place but that elected members may attend meetings in person once social distancing was no longer a requirement. It was also agreed that Officers would develop proposals to allow live streaming of Councils/Committee meetings and submit a report outlining any financial and operational implications to the September meeting of the Council.
- 4.3 Following announcements from the Scottish Government in July 2021 regarding the relaxation of many of the Covid restrictions and following discussions through the Strategic Leadership Forum it was agreed that hybrid meetings would commence with effect from the 10 August Policy & Resources Committee.
- 4.4 The majority of officers have continued to attend meetings remotely and this is acknowledged by the CMT to be beneficial in terms of both their time management but also in terms of making it a safer environment for those physically attending meetings. The press and public have the option to physically attend but uptake of this has been very low.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION- HYBRID MEETINGS

- 5.1 At the time of writing the report there have now been 4 hybrid Committee meetings and by and large the feedback from Members has been positive particularly from those in physical attendance but there are occasional audio or connectivity issues for those attending remotely.
- 5.2 Specific issues identified include difficulty hearing those in the Chambers when not speaking directly into the microphone, same issue for those remote attendees who did not speak into the microphone, those attending by phone not always remembering to mute their phones when not speaking and the location of the large screen within the Chambers.
- 5.3 Officers installed 2 air purifiers and a CO2 monitor within the Chambers whilst opening the main and side doors during public business. The readings monitored by officers have been well within acceptable limits albeit the warm spell in late August did generate comments about the Chambers feeling stuffy. Officers will continue to investigate ways in which the ventilation within the Council Chambers can be enhanced.
- 5.4 Overall officers believe that the hybrid meeting approach has been relatively successful and has afforded Members the flexibility to attend meetings either in person or remotely. It is recommended that this approach is retained post pandemic. However this approach does mean that the locations from which Committees and Council meetings can be delivered are largely restricted to those serviced by the Council network, and are of an appropriate size which lend themselves to the potential delivery of recorded hybrid meetings.
- 5.5 Given the current high level of Covid cases, with the potential for the re-introduction of social distancing measures in future, and to allow for any future situation when the Chair/Convener, failing which the Vice-Chair/Convener, cannot attend a meeting in person, it would be appropriate for the Council to retain fully remote meetings as an option. In light of this the Interim Head of Legal Services has revised the Remote Meeting Protocol which was approved by the Council in June 2020 and a copy is set out at Appendix 2. Separately, the new draft Protocol for Hybrid meetings is attached to Appendix 1.

6.0 RECORDING OF MEETINGS

- 6.1 During the hybrid meetings proceedings have continued to be recorded, however these recordings have not been placed on the website for access by the public on the basis that the public could physically attend the meetings if they wish. The recorded meetings are currently to assist with the drafting of the minutes and a disposal policy is being prepared by Legal Services to ensure that these recordings are not retained for any longer than they need be.
- 6.2 Following discussion at the SLF on 9 September it is proposed to recommence the posting of meetings on the website from today's meeting pending a decision from Members as to whether they would wish meetings to be recorded at all, live streamed or recorded and retrospectively placed on the website for viewing.
- 6.3 Officers have undertaken an analysis of the number of "hits" those meetings currently posted on the Council's website have received. The table provides a summary of the analysis.

Total Committees	53
Highest Views	60
Lowest Views	0
Average Views	8

These hits will not differentiate between those generated internally within the Council and those generated by a member of the public wishing to view the whole or aspects of the Committee meeting. It can be seen however that the number of hits are relatively low. It would be expected that numbers watching live streamed meetings would be lower.

6.4 Option 1 – No Recording of Meetings

This reverts to the pre-pandemic position and means that any member of the public who wishes to view /hear proceedings is required to physically attend. There are no extra resources associated with this option.

Option 2 – Record Meetings using current equipment and place on Council Website

This was the approach used during the fully remote meetings and was relatively successful as all attendees appeared on the screen and generally the audio was good provided attendees spoke clearly and used the technology correctly.

With the move to hybrid meetings the quality of this approach has diminished slightly as those in the Chambers cannot be clearly viewed as the Chambers takes up the same space on the screen as an individual remote attendee. As a result the meeting becomes more of an audio recording than an audio visual one. Whilst there are options that allow the screen to only show the person talking this can become problematical if there is an extraneous noise or more than one person is speaking at a time.

As indicated above the numbers viewing pre-recorded meetings is low but on the basis of using the current technology there are no material extra costs.

Option 3 – Record Meetings using enhanced technology and place on the Council Website

This would use the same technology as live streaming but not have the inherent risks that live streaming presents. A 3 year contract would cost around £50,000 for the hardware and support. This option along with the live-streaming option will require increased Committee Services resource to set up and moderate proceedings. Based on 12 hours per week the cost would be £15k /year.

Option 4 – Live Stream Meetings

This would largely have the same costs as option 3 but does carry a greater risk given that proceedings are live and once streamed cannot be "pulled back" in the event that something inappropriate is said or happens. Members will be aware of well publicised problems occurring in other meetings in other Local Authorities and how quickly these can go "viral". Officers do not believe that based on the pre-recorded "hits" to-date the perceived benefits of live streaming justify the potential risks.

- 6.5 There is likely to be a range of views from Members regarding the benefits/risks of recording/live-

streaming meetings and officers will progress which ever option is chosen. At a recent SLF there was support for recoding meetings but no support indicated for live streaming.

6.6 It is proposed that Quasi-Judicial meetings should continue to be excluded from recording for the website/using enhanced technology/ live streaming and should continue to operate with members of the public either attending in person or joining remotely with recordings only being for the restricted purpose of drafting Minutes.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

The estimated net annual revenue cost of Options 3 & 4 is around £32,000. There is no specific budget to meet this cost and if Members were minded to support either of these options then it is recommended that this be considered in the context of the 2022/23 Budget and the current financial challenges.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
TBC	TBC	2021/24	£95k		Based on a 3 year contract

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

7.2 Legal

It is likely that there will be Data Protection implications should Members decide to record/live stream meetings at which members of the public are in attendance.

7.3 Human Resources

Any HR implications are highlighted in the report.

7.4 Equalities

(a) Equalities

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

X	YES (An EIA was completed when hybrid Committees were implemented and can be viewed at: https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2021)
	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

7.5 Repopulation

There are no repopulation issues arising.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Corporate Management have been consulted and would not recommend Option 4.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

Appendix 1

HYBRID MEETINGS PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURE RULES FOR COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

This protocol and these procedure rules provide guidance for the conduct of any hybrid meeting of the Council and its various Committees, Sub-Committees and Boards, including quasi-judicial meetings, whereby at their discretion Members can attend in person or can join meetings remotely.

This protocol and these procedure rules should be read in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration. In the event of a conflict between (i) this protocol and these procedure rules, and (ii) the Council's Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration, then this protocol and these procedure rules shall prevail while they remain in force and effect.

1. Advance Questions

All Members are encouraged to support the meeting arrangements by asking questions of clarification or detail in advance of the meeting. This may assist Members on points of clarification before the meeting and will allow Members to focus on the key issues and items for decision at the online meeting. Questions can still, of course, be asked at the meeting.

2. Meeting Management

- a. All Members have been provided with the Webex meeting guide for attendees and have been invited to participate in Webex training. Any training requests will be supported by officers.
- b. At their discretion, Members can choose a neutral background for the meeting but Members should note that this may affect their connectivity.
- c. All Members will receive a Webex or other electronic invitation prior to each meeting. Members should contact the Committee Section at least 24 hours prior to the commencement of a meeting in order to indicate if they wish to attend remotely or if they wish to attend in person.
- d. To support the remote element of the meeting, the Committee Officer's role will be to issue the Webex or such other electronic invites, to host the meeting, to manage declarations of interest by moving remotely connected Members to the lobby and re-admitting them to the meeting at the appropriate time and expelling the public and press from the meeting at the appropriate juncture. It will also be the Committee Officer's role to make contact with any Member who loses connectivity by sending a text message to that Member with the number which will permit that Member to rejoin the meeting by phone if they are unable to reconnect by video. A note of the

number will also be provided on the hard copy of the agenda/papers issued to Members.

- e. The Convener will, at the beginning of the meeting, briefly recap the protocol for participation in the meeting. A roll call of Members will then be taken by the Committee Officer and declarations of interest will be requested. If a Member joins the meeting remotely after the roll call, he/she is requested to use the chat function to notify everyone.
- f. The normal quorum requirements for meetings as set out in the Council's Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration shall apply to hybrid meetings.
- g. Members should not leave the meeting during any item of business. If Members do leave during an item of business which is not of a quasi-judicial nature they should consider carefully whether they should participate in the decision on any item of business for which they were not present. If the item of business is of a quasi-judicial nature, the Member must be present throughout its consideration and, if not present continuously for that item, the Member cannot participate in the decision-making on that item. Failure of the remote meeting connection is dealt with later in this note.
- h. It assists meeting management for remote Members to be logged in to all meetings as "Cllr" NAME.
- i. It will be necessary for the Convener/Chair of each hybrid meeting to physically attend the meeting in person. In the event the Convener/Chair is unable to physically attend the Vice-Convener/Chair will preside, failing which it will be necessary to hold a fully remote meeting. In the event the Convenor/Chair or Vice-Convenor/Chair are only able to attend remotely they should, where possible, provide the Committee Section with 48 hours' notice in order that suitable arrangements can be made to hold a fully remote meeting.

3. Meeting Procedure

Members should follow the meeting procedure below. This procedure also applies to the outside representatives on the Education & Communities Committee.

(a) Meeting procedure for Members who attend a meeting remotely

- The Committee Officer will open the meeting 15 minutes prior to its commencement and Members who are joining remotely are asked to co-operate by joining the meeting as early as possible prior to the stated commencement time.

- All Members attending remotely should ensure their automatic Webex or other service identifier clearly states their name.
- Members must not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video feed.
- All Members attending remotely should have their microphones muted when not talking.
- Members attending remotely should indicate to the Convener that they wish to speak by sending a message “to everyone” through the chat facility, for noting by the Convener and Committee Officers. Messages sent “to everyone” in the chat facility are part of the public record.
- Members should only unmute their microphone when the Convener invites them to speak.
- Only one person may speak at any one time.
- If a remotely connected Member requires to leave the hybrid meeting temporarily for any reason other than connection failure, the Member must send a message “to everyone” through the chat facility for notice of the Convener and Committee Officers to ensure their temporary absence can be noted and the Member must send a similar message when returning to the meeting to ensure this is recorded in the minute.
- If a Member participating remotely requires to leave the hybrid meeting early, the Member must send a message through the chat to everyone facility for notice of the Convener and Committee Officer to ensure this is recorded in the minute.
- Any Officer who is attending remotely who leaves the meeting must advise the Convener and Committee Officers of their departure by using the chat to everyone facility.

(b) Members participating by phone

- Members participating by phone should if possible mute their telephone microphone when not speaking.
- Any Member participating by phone who requires to leave the remote meeting temporarily must state this when departing from and rejoining the meeting.
- Any Member participating by phone who requires to leave the remote meeting early must state this when departing from the meeting.
- Members participating by phone should only speak when invited to do so by the Convener/Chair.

(c) Members attending the Chambers in person

- Members attending in person must indicate that they wish to speak by pressing their light.
- A Member must wait to be invited to speak by the Convener/Chair.

- All Members in the Chambers will require to project their voice and speak clearly.
- Only the Convener/Chair may attend the Chambers with their laptop for the purpose of monitoring the chat function.
- Members must wear masks at all times when not seated in the Chambers for so long as this remains a requirement of Coronavirus legislation and guidance of the Scottish Government.

(d) Officers attending remotely or in person will also require to comply with the above protocol.

4. Debate and Voting

- a. The Convener will introduce each item on the agenda and manage the business on the agenda.
- b. Normal Council and Committee procedures will be followed in terms of questions, discussions, motions, amendments etc. As stated above, Members on video feed must use the chat facility on Webex or such other electronic system in use to indicate to the Convener that they wish to speak. The Convener will regularly monitor the chat function to ensure that Members are engaged. The chat function will not be available to Members who have joined the meeting by phone. The Convener will therefore ask those Members individually at each item if they wish to speak. Members who wish privacy for any reason can choose to disable temporarily, or for the whole duration of the meeting, their own video function but in this situation the chat function remains available to them for their participation in the progress of the meeting. If Members disable their video function temporarily to retrieve papers or to relocate their seating/access location this will not constitute leaving the meeting unless they are not able to hear meeting progress or participate in the meeting in which case they should instead notify everyone they are temporarily leaving the meeting as noted above.
- c. When the Convener is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate, the Convener will progress to making a decision.
- d. If there is a vote on an agenda item, the vote will be taken by roll call and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting will be recorded.
- e. The Legal Adviser to the Committee will call out the name of each Member present with:
 - Members stating “motion” or “amendment” to indicate their vote when their name is called or otherwise to “abstain”;
 - the Legal Adviser to the Committee will clearly state the result of the vote and the Convener will then move onto the next agenda item.

5. Declarations of Interest

Any Member who declares an interest in any item of business which would normally require them to leave the room, must also leave the hybrid meeting. The Committee Officer will move any Member attending remotely to the lobby and readmit the Member to the meeting at the appropriate time.

6. Exclusion of Public and Press

- a. Where a confidential or “exempt” item is under consideration, the Committee Officer and Legal Adviser to the Committee will ensure that there are no members of the public or press in physical attendance or remotely accessing the meeting and able to hear or see the proceedings once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting and the Legal Adviser to the Committee will confirm this to the Convener prior to any private business being conducted.
- b. Members who are joining remotely must ensure that there are no other persons present at their location who are not entitled to be present (either hearing or seeing) during consideration of such items, and/or recording the proceedings.

7. Connection Failure

- a. If any Member who is attending the meeting remotely loses connection they should try to rejoin the meeting. If unsuccessful, Members should call the *join by phone* number provided in the electronic meeting invitation. One of the Committee Officers, immediately upon becoming aware that a Member has lost connectivity, will notify the Convener and send a text message to the Member with a note of the phone number to enable the Member to re-join the meeting by audio. It will be the responsibility of each Member attending remotely to ensure that their mobile phone is charged and within reach during the meeting. A note of the phone number will also be provided to Members on the hard copy of the agenda and papers issued.
- b. When it appears there has been a remote meeting connection failure affecting a Member or Members, the Convener should immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:
 - If the meeting is still quorate, then, at the discretion of the Convener, having regard to the nature of the item of business, **either**:
 - i. the business of the meeting may continue; **or**
 - ii. the meeting will be paused for a maximum period of 5 minutes to allow reconnection of the Member or Members affected, during which time no business will be considered or transacted, the presumption being that when **either** the affected Members have reconnected **or** 5 minutes have expired the meeting will continue to deal with business, provided it remains quorate.

- If the meeting is no longer quorate, then:
 - i. the meeting will be paused for a maximum period of 5 minutes, to allow reconnection of the Member or Members affected, during which time no business will be considered or transacted;
 - ii. if the affected Member or Members reconnect to the meeting and the meeting is once again quorate, the meeting will continue to deal with business;
 - iii. if after 5 minutes the meeting is still not quorate, the meeting shall adjourn for a further period specified by the Convener, expected to be no more than 15 minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established; and
 - iv. if, after such an adjournment, the meeting is still not quorate then the meeting shall be further adjourned to an appropriate date and time.

The presumption is that a quorate meeting will continue to deal with business.

- c. If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.
- d. If a remote Member has a connection failure and is able to rejoin the meeting, the Member must use the chat “to everyone” to advise the Convener, the Committee Officers and the Committee and to indicate the items for which they were not present.
- e. In the event of a fully remote meeting if the connection to the Convener is lost, the Vice-Convener will exercise discretion in terms above. If the Vice-Convener is not present (or connection is lost), the remaining Members will elect a replacement Chair for the purpose only of exercising the Convener’s discretion in terms above.
- f. If a connection to a Member is lost during a meeting of a Quasi-Judicial Board, the Chair will stop the meeting to enable the connection to be restored. If the connection cannot be restored within a reasonable time, which period shall be specified by the Convener/Chair, the meeting will only proceed at the discretion of the Chair, and if the meeting is quorate but the Member who was disconnected will not be able to take part in the decision on the matter under discussion. If the Chair so chooses, the quasi-judicial item may be adjourned to an appropriate later time or day. In the event of connection failure of more than one Member for a quasi-judicial item, the presumption will be that the Chair adjourns the meeting to an appropriate later time or day.

8. Attendance of the Public

- a. Members of the public can attend remotely or in person, subject to the

legislation, regulations and guidance of the UK and Scottish Government with regard to social distancing measures in place at any time.

- b. For quasi-judicial meetings where there is no legal entitlement for applicants or others to make representations, arrangements will be made in the interests of transparency and community engagement to issue electronic invites to those members of the community with an interest who make a request that they wish to attend the meeting but do not wish to attend the Chambers in person..
- c. For those other quasi-judicial meetings where there are legal entitlements for applicants or others to make representations, arrangements will be made for online participation for parties involved with electronic invitations being issued to those who wish to join remotely rather than attend the Chambers in person

Appendix 2

REMOTE MEETINGS PROCEDURE AND PROTOCOL FOR COMMITTEES

This protocol and procedure rules provide guidance for the conduct of any remote online meeting of the Council and its various Committees and Sub-Committees and Boards **including quasi- judicial meetings.**

This protocol and procedure should be read in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration. **In the event of a conflict between (i) this protocol and these procedure rules, and (ii) the Council's Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration, then this protocol and these procedural rules shall prevail while they remain in force and effect.**

1. Advance Questions

All Members are encouraged to support the meeting arrangements by asking questions of clarification or detail in advance of the meeting. This may assist Members on points of clarification before the meeting and will allow Members to focus on the key issues and items for decision at the online meeting. Questions can still of course be asked at the meeting. It will also assist if any Members who wish to speak on a particular agenda item could inform the Convener in advance of the start of the meeting, where it is possible to do so, and this will help the progress of the meeting.

2. Meeting Management

- a. All Members have been provided with the Webex meeting guide for attendees and have been invited to participate in Webex training. Any training requests will be supported by officers.
- b. At their discretion, Members can choose a neutral background for the meeting but Members should note this may affect their connectivity.
- c. To support the videoconferencing meeting, the Committee Officer's role will be to issue Webex invites, to host the meeting, to manage declarations of interest by moving Members to the lobby and re-admitting them to the meeting at the appropriate time and expelling the public and press from the meeting at the appropriate juncture. **It will also be the Committee Officer's role to make contact with any Member who loses connectivity by sending a text message to that Member with a number which will permit that Member to rejoin the meeting by phone if they are unable to reconnect by video. A note of the number will also be provided on the hard copy of the agenda/papers issued to Members.**
- d. The Convener will, at the beginning of the meeting, briefly recap the protocol for participation in the meeting. A roll call of Members will then be taken by the Committee Officer and declarations of interest will be requested. If a

Member joins the meeting after the roll call, he/she is requested to use the chat function to notify everyone.

- e. The normal quorum requirements for meetings as set out in the Council's Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration shall apply to remote meetings.
- f. Members should not leave the meeting during any item of business. If **Members do leave**, ~~they should not take part in the decision on any item of business they are not present for~~ **during an item of business which is not of a quasi-judicial nature, they should consider carefully whether they should participate in the decision on any item of business for which they were not present.** If the item of business is of a quasi-judicial nature, the Member must be present throughout its consideration and, if not present continuously for that item, the Member cannot participate in the decision-making on that item. Failure of the remote meeting connection is dealt with later in this note.

3. Meeting Procedure

Members should follow the meeting procedure below. This procedure also applies to the outside representatives on the Education & Communities Committee.

- The Committee Officer will open the meeting 15 minutes prior to its commencement and Members are asked to co-operate by joining the meeting as early as possible prior to the stated commencement time.
- All Members should ensure their automatic Webex identifier clearly states their name.
- Members must not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video feed.
- All Members on video should have their microphones muted when not talking.
- Any Members participating by phone should, if possible, mute their telephone microphone when not speaking.
- Members should use the chat facility on Webex to indicate to the Convener that they wish to speak. This can be facilitated by sending a message to all participants. The chat facility "to everyone" is part of the public record.
- Members should unmute their microphone when the Convener invites them to speak.
- Only one person may speak at any one time.
- If a Member requires to leave the remote meeting temporarily for any reason other than connection failure, the Member must send a message through the chat to everyone facility to ensure their temporary absence can be noted and the Member must send a similar message when returning to the meeting to ensure this is recorded in the minute.

- The chat record is the official record of attendance.
- Any Member participating by phone who requires to leave the remote meeting temporarily must state this when departing from and rejoining the meeting.
- If a Member requires to leave the remote meeting early, the Member must send a message through the chat to everyone facility to ensure this is recorded in the minute.
- Any Member participating by phone who requires to leave the remote meeting early must state this when departing from the meeting.
- Any Officer who leaves the meeting must advise the Committee of their departure by using the chat to everyone facility.

4. Debate and Voting

- a. The Convener will introduce each item on the agenda and manage the business on the agenda.
- b. Normal Council and Committee procedures will be followed in terms of questions, discussions, motions, amendments etc. As stated above, Members on video feed must use the chat facility on Webex to indicate to the Convener that they wish to speak. The Convener will regularly monitor the chat function to ensure that Members are engaged. The chat function will not be available to Members who have joined the meeting by phone. The Convener will therefore ask those Members individually at each item if they wish to speak. Members who wish privacy for any reason can choose to disable temporarily, or for the whole duration of the meeting, their own video function but in this situation the chat function remains available to them for their participation in the progress of the meeting. If Members disable their video function temporarily to retrieve papers or to relocate their seating/access location this will not constitute leaving the meeting unless they are not able to hear meeting progress or participate in the meeting in which case they should instead notify everyone they are temporarily leaving the meeting as noted above.
- c. When the Convener is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate, the Convener will progress to making a decision.
- d. If there is a vote on an agenda item, the vote will be taken by roll call and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting will be recorded.
- e. The Legal Adviser to the Committee will call out the name of each Member present with:
 - Members stating “motion” or “amendment” to indicate their vote when their name is called or otherwise to “abstain”;
 - the Legal Adviser to the Committee will clearly state the result of the vote and the Convener will then move onto the next agenda item.

5. Declarations of Interest

Any Member who declares an interest in any item of business which would normally require them to leave the room, must also leave the remote meeting. The Committee Officer will move that Member to the lobby and readmit the Member to the meeting at the appropriate time.

6. Exclusion of Public and Press

- a. Where a confidential or “exempt” item is under consideration, the Committee Officer and Legal Adviser to the Committee will ensure that there are no members of the public or press in remote attendance or remotely accessing the meeting and able to hear or see the proceedings once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting and the Legal Adviser to the Committee will confirm this to the Convener prior to any private business being conducted.
- b. Members must ensure that there are no other persons present at their location who are not entitled to be (either hearing or seeing) consideration of such items, and/or recording the proceedings.

7. Connection Failure

- a. If any Member loses connection they should try to rejoin the meeting. If unsuccessful, Members should call the *join by phone* number provided in the Webex meeting invitation. **One of the Committee Officers, immediately upon becoming aware that a Member has lost connectivity, will notify the Convener and send a text message to the Member with a note of the phone number to enable the Member to rejoin the meeting by audio. It will be the responsibility of each Member attending remotely to ensure that their mobile phone is charged and within reach during the meeting. A note of the phone number will also be provided to Members on the hard copy of the agenda and papers issued.**
- b. When it appears there has been a remote meeting connection failure affecting a Member or Members, the Convener should immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:
 - **If it is, then at the discretion of the Convener, having regard to the nature of the item of business, of the meeting will continue; or either:**
 - **(i) the business of the meeting may continue; or**
 - **(ii) the meeting will be paused for a maximum period of 5 minutes to allow reconnection of the Member or Members affected, during which time no business will be considered or transacted, the presumption being that when either the affected Members have reconnected or 5 minutes have**

expired the meeting will continue to deal with business, provided it remains quorate.

- **If there is no quorum, then:** ~~the meeting shall adjourn for a period specified by the Convener, expected to be no more than 15 minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established.~~
 - (i) the meeting will be paused for a maximum period of 5 minutes to allow reconnection of the Member or Members affected, during which time no business will be considered or transacted;**
 - (ii) if the affected Member or Members reconnect to the meeting and the meeting is once again quorate, the meeting will continue to deal with the business;**
 - (iii) if after 5 minutes the meeting is still not quorate, the meeting shall adjourn for a further period specified by the Convener, expected to be no more than 15 minutes to allow the reconnection to be re-established; and**
 - (iv) if, after such an adjournment, the meeting is still not quorate then the meeting shall be further adjourned to an appropriate date and time.**

The presumption is that a quorate meeting will continue to deal with business.

- c. If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.
- d. If a Member has a connection failure and is able to rejoin the meeting, the Member must use the chat to everyone facility to advise the Committee and to indicate the items for which they were not present.
- e. If the connection to a Convener is lost, the Vice-Convener will exercise discretion in terms above. If the Vice-Convener is not present (or connection is lost), the remaining Members will elect a replacement Chair for the purpose only of exercising the Convener's discretion in terms above.
- f. If a connection to a Member is lost during a meeting of a Quasi-Judicial Board, the Chair will stop the meeting to enable the connection to be restored. If the connection cannot be restored within a reasonable time, **which period shall be specified by the Convener/Chair**, the meeting will only proceed at the discretion of the Chair **and if the meeting is quorate**, but the Member who was disconnected will not be able to take part in the decision on the matter under discussion. If the Chair so chooses, the quasi-judicial item may be adjourned to an appropriate later time or day. In the event of connection failure of more than one Member for a quasi-judicial item, the presumption will be that the Chair adjourns the meeting to an appropriate later time or day.

8. Attendance of the Public

- a. **When meetings are held remotely** the public will therefore be excluded from meetings in terms of paragraph 13 of Schedule 6 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 **be unable to physically attend the meeting.**
- b. **For quasi-judicial meetings where there is no legal entitlement for applicants or others to make representations, arrangements will be made in the interests of transparency and community engagement** to ~~webcast live the proceedings of the Planning Board and Local Review Body (to be introduced as soon as arrangements can be made).~~ **Issue electronic invitations to those members of the community with an interest to make a request that they wish to attend the meeting.**
- c. **For those other quasi-judicial meetings where there are legal entitlements for applicants or others to make representations, arrangements will be made for online participation for parties involved** ~~A secure, safe room with online meeting availability has been made available for applicants and those who may make representations. In this way, meetings of the General Purposes Board, Education Appeals Committee (Placing Requests & Exclusions) and HR Appeals Board etc. and, separate from the Council, the Licensing Board will be facilitated.~~ **with electronic invitations being issued to those who wish to join remotely.**
- d. ~~The meeting room availability will be given to any parties making representations to the Petitions Committee.~~ **A secure safe room with on-line meeting availability will be offered to any parties or their representative who do not have electronic means to join a meeting.**