

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel

**Date**                    **15 September 2022**

**Report of:**            **Head of Democratic Services**

**Subject:**            **ARRANGEMENTS FOR LIVE STREAMING COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

#### **SUMMARY**

In March 2022, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel received a presentation on the live streaming of Council and Committee meetings. Following a debate on the item, the Scrutiny Panel was advised that a further report would be presented, detailing the options available for live streaming.

This report provides that update on the options for live streaming meetings and follows the motion which was originally proposed to Council by Councillor Forrest in October 2021.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report and agrees that no further action be taken to live stream Council and Committee meetings at this time.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. At its meeting on 21 October 2021, Councillor J S Forrest proposed the following motion to Council:

“This Council endorse the policies set out in the LGA publication Improving Digital Citizenship: a practical guide for councillors which encourages councillors to avoid ‘the spread of unverified rumours, misinformation and disinformation’, as well as acknowledging that a key factor in limiting misinformation is to make accurate information as widely available as possible, by encouraging public engagement in its business, and providing easy access to the fullest possible record of its meetings;

That the Council notes that the live streaming of meetings during the Covid lockdown was a step forward in improving access to meetings and provided a fuller record of debate than is possible through the Council’s minutes; and

That the Council resolves to resume live streaming of meetings of the Council, Scrutiny Panels and main committees as soon as possible, taking advantage of the current review of Ways of Working to do so as cost-effectively as possible.”

## **BACKGROUND**

2. In response to the motion, the Head of Democratic Services gave a presentation to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 3 March 2022. The presentation gave details on the background of how and when live streaming of formal committee meetings commenced and the reasons why it had since ceased. Various options were outlined that could be available to the Council, as well as highlighting the key issues which should be taken into consideration.
3. All Scrutiny Panel members recognised the benefit of live streaming meetings as a way of maximising the transparency of the Council’s democratic decision-making process, and they acknowledged that there will be some people who would prefer to watch meetings from the comfort and convenience of their own home rather than having to travel into the Civic Offices.
4. However, members acknowledged that there is likely a significant cost involved in being able to provide this service, along with additional staffing resources, and many argued that in the current financial climate this money could be better used for other services.
5. There was also an acknowledgement that the demand for this from the customer is very low and even during lockdown when the Council meetings could only be viewed via live streamed channels, the viewing figures were not substantial, leading some members to question the value for money for on-going live streaming.

## **TECHNOLOGY AND RESOURCING REQUIREMENTS**

6. There is currently a single camera set up in both the Council Chamber and in the Collingwood Room. Each of these cameras provide a fixed and static image of the room and were installed to enable virtual meetings to be held via Microsoft Teams.
7. These cameras have been used to broadcast committee and Council meetings via the Council’s YouTube channel but as the image is static it is not possible to focus in on the speaker and can lead to confusion as to who is speaking at any one time. Some attendees of the meeting are sat within the view of the camera image at all and therefore

do not appear on screen.

8. The current audio sound system is capable of having an auto camera management system added to it. This would allow the existing fixed camera to auto zoom or focus on the individual speaking within the meeting room. In order to provide a broadcast quality image, 4 additional cameras would be required to be installed in the meeting rooms. The physical layout of rooms must be set and configured the same for each type of meeting.
9. The quoted cost for installing this enhancement is circa £40,000. This system would need to be managed at all times during use and therefore an ICT technician would need to present to support the entire duration of the meeting (currently the support is provided for the first half hour of every meeting to ensure that the microphones are operating).

## **CONCLUSION**

10. In conclusion, it is recommended that no further action be taken at this time, given that there is no current budget identified in order to purchase the additional equipment required and that the additional resource time necessary to be provided by the ICT team would be better deployed to support other Council priorities.

### **Background Papers:**

None

### **Reference Papers:**

Minutes of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Panel 3 March 2022 – Item 7 Motion on Live Streaming of Meetings

### **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Leigh Usher (01329 824553)