POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 19 JULY 2021

PART I – DELEGATED

7.   LIVESTREAMING OF COUNCIL/COMMITTEE/SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS (CED)

1   Summary

1.1   A motion was received for full Council on 13 July 2021 as detailed below:

Proposer: Cllr Alex Hayward, seconded by Councillor Ciaran Reed

In order to maximise transparency and electoral accountability this Council believes that the residents of Three Rivers should all be able to access the meetings of this Council via live streaming and that this Council looks to implement this facility as soon as possible.

1.2   Under Rule 11(6) of the Council Constitution the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of Council referred the motion to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 19 July 2021 for discussion and debate and to then report back to Council on 19 October 2021 with a decision on whether to implement livestreaming facilities.

1.3   The definitions for webcasting and livestreaming meetings are:

Webcasting - broadcasting/presenting over the internet (web + broadcast = webcast) which can include pre-recorded material and broadcast to a large audience

Live streaming - online streaming media simultaneously broadcast and recorded online. Often streamed to social media channels.

1.4   This report has been prepared to aid the debate/discussion on the motion and provide some information on livestreaming meetings.

2   Details

2.1   Virtual meetings and Livestreaming of those meetings

2.1.1   Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic all Council/Committee/Sub-Committee and Forum meetings were held in person up to March 2020.

2.1.2   Following a change in Government legislation in April 2020, we were able to hold all Council/Committee/Sub-Committee meetings virtually using a variety of platforms (which included 8x8 and Zoom) with all the meetings livestreamed by an external company (with the exception of Part II business).

2.1.3   It is a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1972 as amended that all public meetings are accessible apart from any Part II confidential business.

2.1.4   All the Council/Committee/Sub-Committee meetings from May 2020 to April 2021 were livestreamed with all the recordings being kept for a year. Details on the livestreaming viewings were included in the Members' Information Bulletin.

2.1.5   From 7 May 2021 the ability to hold virtual Council/Committee/Sub-Committee meetings ceased on expiry of the enabling Regulations and the Council reverted to physical meetings, a legal challenge having been unsuccessful.

2.1.6 Counsel's advice on holding virtual Local Area Forum meetings was obtained and was to the effect that (as they have no decision making powers) those meetings could continue virtually.

2.1.7 Under the Licensing Act 2003, we are able to hold Licensing sub-committee meetings virtually, this being separate legislation, with the necessary authority. The Council has submitted a response to a recent call for evidence by DCLG which supported the ability to hold virtual meetings. A government response is awaited.

2.2 Livestreaming meetings in the future

2.2.1 Quotes are being obtained from two companies to livestream our meetings and some information is provided below in the report.

2.2.2 Currently, there are no facilities to livestream or webcast meetings from the Penn Chamber to the internet. In order to live stream or webcast meetings the Penn Chamber would need the necessary equipment installed which would need to be linked to the sound system so we could 'track' the speaker with the layout for each meeting programmed into the system. We may also require some upgrade of the control system used in the Penn Chamber to do this but will depend on the technicians view of our existing equipment.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 That officers obtain updated detailed quotes on the livestreaming of meetings but with the need to include any maintenance and support for the system for the Committee to review in September using the following list of requirements:
- To be able to live stream a meeting on a link accessible from the Council's website which could be published with the agenda.
- To be able to retain a recording of the live stream to be accessible from the Council's website via the link for a year after the meeting.
- For the cameras within the room to track the participants in the meeting when they are speaking.
- The live stream should be simple to operate by officers so that it is simple to end a live stream when the meeting concludes or moves into Part 2 session and with a clear ability for a simple return to broadcasting of Part I
- For the system to comply with the Council's ICT security policies.
- For there to be minimal staff resource required in operating the system.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 Two initial quotes were received in April 2021 one being for £46.5k and another for £38k. One of the companies has visited the Council offices and are preparing a formal quote which should be received shortly. Should the project go ahead funding can be found from the Three Rivers House Transformation capital budget of £270k to pay for the installation and equipment.

5.2 In addition to the cost of the required equipment there will also be an ongoing cost to support the livestreaming of the meetings and any maintenance required. When formal quotes are received this will be included. This could be funded from the

revenue carry forward of £19k from 2020/21 in the Facilities budget and would need to be built into future years budgets once this reserve was exhausted.

6   Legal Implications

6.1   There is no legal requirement to livestream meetings.

6.2   If meetings continue to be held in person the requirement for the public to have access to the meeting would be complied with and if the livestreaming was disrupted in any way there would be no legal requirement to ensure it continued to run as we are already legally compliant.

6.3   Where a project is valued at between £5K and £50K, there is no requirement for a formal tender process. It would be necessary to advertise the requirement and invite at least three, and usually no more than six, written quotations or tenders demonstrating value for money through a combination of cost and quality.

7   Equal Opportunities Implications

7.1   Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	Yes
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

7.2   Impact Assessment

         Not applicable.

8   Staffing Implications

8.1   Consideration will need to be given as to whether additional Committee team staff or Facilities team staff would be needed for livestreaming although we would look to implement a solution which does not require additional staff.

9.   Environmental Implications

9.2   If the Council did agree to livestream meetings there would be reduced travel by Councillors (non-committee members), Parish Councillors, County Councillors and members of the public to attend meetings as the option to watch live from a computer would be provided therefore this would have a positive benefit to the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

9   Community Safety and Public Health implications

9.1   None specific.

10   Customer Services Centre Implications

11.1   All CSC staff would be provided with details on the livestreaming of meetings should Council agree to this. A CSC mailbox to be notified when an agenda is published through mod.gov. They will then be aware that the agenda is on the website and

therefore, the livestreaming link will also be available (for all Part I business of the meeting)

11   Communications and Website Implications

12.1   If the Council did agree to livestream all Council/Committee and Sub-Committee meetings then the website would be updated to advise accordingly and all agendas would be provided with a livestream link to watch the meeting on publication. All social media channels will also be used to publicise the option to livestream the meeting.

12   Risk and Health & Safety Implications

12.1   The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at http://www.threerivers.gov.uk. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

12.2   The subject of this report would be covered by the Committee service plan.

12.3   There are no risks resulting from this report

13   Recommendation

14.1   That officers obtain updated detailed quotes on the livestreaming of meetings but with the need to include any maintenance and support for the system for the Committee to review in September using the following list of requirements:
- To be able to live stream a meeting on a link accessible from the Council's website which could be published with the agenda.
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- The live stream should be simple to operate by officers so that it is simple to end a live stream when the meeting concludes or moves into Part 2 session and with a clear ability for a simple return to broadcasting of Part I.
- For the system to comply with the Council's ICT security policies.
- For there to be minimal staff resource required in operating the system.

Report prepared by: Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

Data Quality

Data sources: None

Data checked by: James Baldwin, Tracy Langley, Caroline Harris, Emma Tiernan, Nigel Pollard

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	X
3	High	

Background Papers - none

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Equality impact assessment – Form A