

**Impact Assessment - First Stage**

**1. Details of the initiative**

<p><b>Initiative description and summary:</b></p> <p>To seek approval from members to purchase a hybrid meeting system and to agree refurbishment of the Council Chamber to facilitate the attendance at such hybrid meetings.</p>
<p><b>Service Area:</b> Legal and Democratic Services</p>
<p><b>Directorate:</b> Chief Executives</p>

**2. Does the initiative affect:**

	Yes	No
Service users	X	
Staff	X	
Wider community	X	
Internal administrative process only	X	

**3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:**

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		X				There will be no impact on this protected characteristic
Disability	X				M	The modifications proposed to the Council Chamber to accommodate a hybrid system will allow greater access for members of the public who have this protected characteristic as any adjustments made will be in accordance with equality

						legislation, all with the aim of removing any barriers to participation in Council processes
Gender Reassignment		X				There would be no impact on this protected characteristic as a result of this proposal
Marriage/Civil Partnership		X				There would be no impact on this protected characteristic as a result of this proposal
Pregnancy/Maternity	X				L	A hybrid meeting policy will all individuals to access meetings remotely and negate any travelling, removing any barriers that might be in place for those with this protected characteristic to enable them to participate fully in Council processes.
Race						There would be no impact on this protected characteristic as a result of this proposal
Religion/Belief		X				There would be no impact on this protected characteristic as a result of this proposal
Sex		X				There would be no impact on this protected characteristic as a result of this proposal
Sexual orientation		X				There would be no impact on this protected characteristic as a result of this proposal

**4. Does the initiative impact on:**

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language	X				M	The development of a hybrid meeting system will allow for simultaneous translation of Full Council meetings ensuring that

						those that wish to use the medium of Welsh in Full Council meetings will be able to do so. In addition, where members of the public wish to participate in a meeting via the medium of Welsh they will be able to do as the technological requirements will be in place.
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English	X				M	The development of a hybrid meeting system will allow for simultaneous translation of Full Council meetings ensuring that those that wish to use the medium of Welsh in Full Council meetings will be able to do so. In addition, where members of the public wish to participate in a meeting via the medium of Welsh they will be able to do as the technological requirements will be in place.

**5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:**

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity		X				It is not expected that the proposal will have any adverse effect on biodiversity or Eco-system resilience.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.	X				M	The introduction of a hybrid meeting policy will present opportunities for elected members and members of the public to participate in Council processes negating the need to travel to attend should they wish, thereby having a positive impact on environmental issues

**6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):**

	Yes	No	Details
<p><b>Long term</b> - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people</p>	X		<p>The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will make new arrangements for meetings that will come into effect in May 2022.</p> <p>These arrangements include (amongst others):</p> <p>(a) The requirement for principal councils to make, and publish, arrangements that ensure that the proceedings of certain types of council meeting are broadcast electronically in a way that allows members of the public, not in attendance, to see and hear proceedings. The proceedings must be broadcast live (subject to any exceptions that may be specified in regulations) and they must be available electronically after the meeting for a period specified in regulations. Clarification has yet to be provided as to which meetings will be covered by this but at this stage it is envisaged it will be Full Council and possible Cabinet/Cabinet Board meetings</p> <p>(b) local authorities must make arrangements that ensure their meetings can take place in a manner which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting. The authority must publish these arrangements, if the arrangements are revised or replaced the new arrangements must also be published. This requirement though does not however require meetings to be held in a certain format. Whether they are held fully virtually, partially virtually – whereby some participants are in the same physical location whilst others join the meeting virtually – or as physical meetings will be a matter for those responsible for arranging the meetings.</p> <p>The proposal will have a positive impact on the basis it will assist in removing blockages to the participation in democratic processes with elected members (and members of the public) being able to attend meetings in person or access and participate in meetings remotely, all with the aim of improving the democratic accountability of the Council and the promotion of public participation in decision making.</p>

<p><b>Integration</b> - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>The proposal will have a positive impact on all three wellbeing objectives, on the basis it will assist in removing blockages to the participation in democratic processes with elected members (and members of the public) being able to attend meetings in person or access and participate in meetings remotely.</p>
<p><b>Involvement</b> - how people have been involved in developing the initiative</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>In 2019 and 2020, the Democratic Service Committee commenced a programme of work to look at public participation in decision making, namely the concept of webcasting of Council meetings and work was undertaken by a Task and Finish Group to investigate the process of webcasting meetings and the level of work that would be required to facilitate this.</p> <p>In order to obtain the views of elected members, a member survey was recently undertaken asking a wide range of questions in order to ascertain how members would feel about the hold of such meetings.</p> <p>The following themes were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the majority of members have felt that the meetings over the last year have worked well</li> <li>(b) the overwhelming majority of members have felt able to participate in remote meetings</li> <li>(c) the majority of members have seen a benefit in remote meetings and have found them a somewhat positive arrangement</li> <li>(d) members would wish to have a variety of options for attendance at meetings but would welcome the opportunity to attend face to face meetings</li> <li>(e) members feel a hybrid policy in attendance could be appropriate</li> <li>(f) members would wish all meetings to be held in a hybrid way though feel that Full Council is best being held in person</li> <li>(g) Chairs and Vice Chairs would wish to have the opportunity to attend in person in order to receive appropriate support</li> <li>(h) Members are concerned about IT reliance and connection issues.</li> </ul>

<b>Collaboration</b> - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions	X		Discussions have been ongoing with other organisations via the Welsh Local Government Association to identify opportunities where local authorities could collaborate for the provisions of such services, with focus being more on hybrid meeting policies and public participation in decision making. Given though that this report relates to the infrastructure necessary to achieve hybrid meetings, no further opportunities for collaboration are available.
<b>Prevention</b> - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	X		The proposal will have a positive impact on the basis it will assist in removing blockages to the participation in democratic processes with elected members (and members of the public) being able to attend meetings in person or access and participate in meetings remotely, all with the aim of improving the democratic accountability of the Council and the promotion of public participation in decision making.

**7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):**

A full impact assessment (second stage) <b>is not</b> required	X
Reasons for this conclusion	
<p>The modifications proposed to the Council Chamber and the development of a hybrid system will allow greater access for members of the public who have any affected protected characteristic as any adjustments made will be in accordance with equality legislation, all with the aim of removing any barriers to participation in Council processes.</p> <p>The proposal will have a positive impact on the basis it will assist in removing blockages to the participation in democratic processes with elected members (and members of the public) being able to attend meetings in person or access and participate in meetings remotely, all with the aim of improving the democratic accountability of the Council and the promotion of public participation in decision making.</p> <p>The introduction of a hybrid meeting policy will present opportunities for elected members and members of the public to participate in Council processes negating the need to travel to attend should they wish, thereby having a positive impact on environmental issues</p> <p>The development of a hybrid meeting system will allow for simultaneous translation of Full Council meetings ensuring that those that wish to use the medium of Welsh in Full Council meetings will be able to do so. In addition, where members of the public wish to participate in a meeting via the medium of Welsh they will be able to do as the technological requirements will be in place.</p>	

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>
Completed by	<b>Craig Griffiths</b>	<b>Head of Legal and Democratic Services</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> August 2021</b>