

DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2671
Committee	Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd
Date	11/03/2024
Attendees	<p>Cynghorwyr John Hill (Cadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Ellen Jones (Is-gadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John C. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Derrick Bevan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Gareth A. Davies (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Lee Parsons (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Councillor Chris Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Lisa Winnett (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Malcolm Cross (Guest)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Wayne Hodgins (Guest)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Ross Leadbeater (Guest)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Jen Morgan, J.P. (Guest)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Guest)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Jacqueline Thomas (Guest)</p> <p>Cynghorydd Joanna Wilkins (Guest)</p> <p>Rhian Hayden (Swyddog)</p> <p>Sarah King (Advisor)</p> <p>Richard Bridge (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrea Prosser (Swyddog)</p> <p>Liz Thomas (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)</p> <p>Louise Rosser (Swyddog)</p> <p>Leeann Turner (Secretary)</p> <p>Ceri Edwards Brown (Secretary)</p> <p>Sean Scannell (Swyddog)</p> <p>Louise Bishop (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (Monitor)</p> <p>Pob Cynghorydd (Monitor)</p>

Item ID	7982
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd
Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais am hynny.

Item ID	7983
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

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Item ID	7984
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a gafwyd.

Item ID	7985
Item Title	Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd
Summary	Derbyn penderfyniadau'r Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Demorataidd a gynhaliwyd ar 13 Gorffennaf 2023. (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y penderfyniadau er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

Item ID	8326
Item Title	Adroddiad Blynyddol y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd. Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais am hynny.

Item ID	8327
Item Title	Polisi Cyfarfod Aml-leoliad ac Opsiynau ar gyfer Siambr y Cyngor wrth symud ymlaen
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Perfformiad a Democrataidd.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE –
13TH JULY, 2023**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors C. Bainton
D. Bevan
G. Davies
E. Jones
J.C. Morgan
L. Parsons
C. Smith
L. Winnett

ALSO: Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs

Vice-Chair of Corporate & Performance Scrutiny
Committee

Councillor J. Thomas

Chair of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Councillor W. Hodgins

Chair of People Scrutiny Committee

Councillor T. Smith

Vice-Chair of Places Scrutiny Committee

Councillor & R. Leadbeater

**AND: Chief Officer Resources
Service Manager Performance & Democratic
Service Manager Policy & Partnerships
Policy Officer**

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillors J. Wilkins and M. Cross Chief Officer Customer & Commercial Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships Head of Organisational Development Organisational Development Manager</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting held on 27th March, 2023.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be received as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>PROPOSED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the proposed Forward Work Programme 2023/2024.</p>	

	<p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Forward Work Programme 2023/2024 be agreed.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>SCHEDULE OF MEMBERS REMUNERATION 2023/2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Schedule of Members Remuneration 2023/2024 be agreed and published.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the planning and consultation process for a new Engagement & Participation Strategy be noted and a joint Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny and Democratic Services Committees Workshop on 26th July, 2023 be agreed to shape development of the initial Strategy.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Members considered the time of future Democratic Services Committee meetings.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that all future Democratic Services Committees commence at 10.00 a.m.</p>	

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Agenda Item 5

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of Meeting: **11 March 2023**
Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member**
Corporate Overview & Performance
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King (Statutory Head of Democratic Services)**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	28/02/24	28.02.24		11/03/24			21/03/24	

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To present the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services for 2023-24 and to provide an opinion on the appropriateness and adequacy of the support being provided to Elected Members.

2. **Scope and Background**

- 2.1 The annual report outlines the comprehensive set of arrangements in place to support Elected Members to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively in a safe and compliant manner.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Option 1 – The Committee approves the report on the basis that it is satisfied there is a sufficient level of support for Elected Members before consideration by Council.

Option 2 – The Committee provides comment and amendments to the report of the Head of Democratic Services for consideration by Council.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 The role of the Head of Democratic Services is a statutory role, following the requirements as outlined by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and set out in the Council's Constitution.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The Council must provide the Head of Democratic Services with resources that, in its opinion, are sufficient to allow the function of the role set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to be discharged.

The Member Development Budget for 2023-24 was £6,260.87.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There are potential risks if the levels of support arrangements for Elected Members are deemed by Council to be not sufficient. The Democratic Services Committee can recommend to Council a review of resources and/or support, if appropriate.

5.3 ***Legal***

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the post of Head of Democratic Services. The role is set out in the Council's Constitution as a statutory function as outlined by within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 The Head of Governance & Partnerships is the appointed Head of Democratic Services.

5.4.2 The role of the Head of Democratic Services is to:-

- carry out the Local Authority's function of designated Head of Democratic Services;
- keep under review the adequacy of provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to discharge the democratic services functions of the authority; and
- make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

5.4.3 The Head of Democratic Services can make recommendations including with regard to the appointment, organisation and management of staff discharging democratic functions. They may arrange for the discharge of democratic functions by staff and can delegate functions to staff as they feel appropriate.

5.4.4 In addition to the Head of Democratic Services, there is comprehensive expertise and support provided by the Deputy Head of Democratic Services (Service Manager, Performance and Democratic) and the Democratic Services Team, who comprise of 5 members of staff providing member services, committee secretariat and support to the Leadership, Cabinet and Presiding Member. There is also 1 Scrutiny Adviser.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

A summary of the key areas and main changes to existing support arrangements for Elected Members which have been implemented in 2023-24 is below.

a) New Democratic & Governance Structure

Following the modernisation and strengthening of the democratic function in the Council following the election, several of the new processes and changes have bedded in and are working well.

- the establishment of the **Presiding Member** position has been well received and in response to a request from Members, an Annual Report outlining the duties and activities conducted by the Presiding Member is presented each year;
- attendance and engagement at **Scrutiny Committees** has been generally good and the cross cutting nature of the Committees is working well. We have revised and expanded the remit of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to include Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria, following a decision by Council;
- a change to **Scrutiny agendas** with a maximum of two items for either Pre-decision or Performance has worked well in most Committees, although further consideration of the Forward Work Programme for Corporate Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee is needed;
- Reviewed and implemented a revised **evaluation** process for scrutiny which is undertaken after each Scrutiny Committee meeting and any issues raised at the Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting or directly with the Head of Democratic Services or Scrutiny Adviser;
- A further change was made to the **Planning Committee** members and voting structure to ensure enhanced and appropriate ward representation (picking up good practice from elsewhere) – this has been a significant improvement;
- A Young Person has been co-opted onto the People Scrutiny Committee to represent the views of Children and Young People and better inform decision making.

b) Gwent Public Services Board Regional Scrutiny Committee

Blaenau Gwent is the lead authority for hosting the above regional scrutiny committee. The team has worked across the five local authorities and other statutory and non-statutory partners to convene an informal workshop to determine the Terms of Reference, Membership (including Chair & Vice Chair), Forward Work Programme, Timing of Meetings, and other arrangements for the Committee (based on the model used for the Cardiff City Region Joint Scrutiny & Overview Committee led by RCT Council). In addition, we liaised with WLGA to ensure training was provided for all Committee Members on joint scrutiny arrangements and decision making.

c) Member Development Programme & Member Briefings

The role of an Elected Member can be complex and challenging. Constantly changing priorities and legislation require difficult decisions for which Members need to be well informed. It is therefore essential that Members are equipped and supported to allow them to undertake their role confidently.

Following the highly successful Induction Programme for all new and returning Members delivered in 2022-23, we continue to deliver an ongoing **Development Programme** to build up additional knowledge and skills for Members in key areas of Council business. As part of this we have recently revised the **Members Handbook**, to take account of organisational changes.

This is supplemented by a large programme of **Member Briefings** where Members are exercising their right to question and gain further understanding of subjects/issues to allow them to be better equipped and more effective in conducting Council business. Some directorates also have quarterly Member briefing sessions diarised which they are using for updates on key portfolio information.

All sessions as part of the Member Induction and Member Development programmes and all Member Briefing sessions have been recorded. The recordings have been uploaded onto the **Members Library** for ease of reference and for those who may have been absent. In addition, all of the online training from WLGA has also been deposited in the Library.

A suite of Member Development policies have been reviewed and updated including the **Member Development Strategy**, **Members Mentoring Framework** and **Members Personal Development Review** and **Competency Framework**. We have been working with Members who have come forward to be Mentors/Mentees as part of the framework to help improve their skills, knowledge and competencies.

In addition, all Senior Salary Holders have undertaken a Personal Development Review and have Personal Action Plans in place for implementation with a follow up meeting in six months. For all other Members who requested a Personal Development Review, the initial meetings have taken place and Personal Action Plans being developed.

d) Informal Wellbeing Sessions

The Wellbeing Champion continues to Chair these sessions and is working with the Head of Democratic Services Team to get a Forward Work Programme of items that Members want to discuss in 2024-25, incorporating in-person catch ups.

e) Local Bi-Election – February 2024

Information provided for the newly elected Councillor immediately following election count and times for the Orientation Meeting at the General Offices where the Member collected ICT equipment and ordered mobile phones; and received copies of the Members Handbook and the Members Induction Programme.

An informal ICT session was put in place to provide support and guidance for the new Member on the set up, access and usage of their Council ICT equipment.

f) New Petitions protocol

The petitions protocol was reviewed in line with the new requirements in legislation and a new protocol (including the use of e-petitions) was adopted and agreed.

g) Family Absence Policy

A policy was developed in line with legislation and existing policies, adopted and agreed to provide for family absences for Elected Members for certain specified

circumstances. The adoption of this policy helps to remove any barriers that individuals might face when considering standing for nomination/election to become a Councillor.

h) Health and Safety

The health and safety of Elected Members is a important and an area that is prioritised including personal safety and self-care, stress management, personal resilience, work-life balance and bullying and harassment, including online abuse.

As part of the Induction Programme for Members, following the election in May 2022, specific sessions were provided on personal safety and Health & Safety at Work.

The WLGA also provide a number of training sessions for Elected Members including sessions designed around specific areas of concern. Resources from the WLGA include:

- [Personal Safety Guidance for Councillors](#)
- [Personal Safety Advice](#)
- [Online Abuse Guidance for Councillors](#)
- [Get Safe Online guidance](#)
- [Recognising the Terrorist Threat Guidance](#)

Elected Members are encouraged to speak to the Council's Health and Safety section and or Head of Democratic Services for support where required.

i) Activity Data

Number of Member Training and/or Briefing sessions	48 sessions (with 13 scheduled for remainder of this cycle)
Number of Council Meetings	1 AGM, 5 Ordinary Meetings, 3 Special Councils
Number of Scrutiny Meetings	17 meetings & 3 Special meetings
Number of Gwent PSB Regional Scrutiny Committee	2 meetings
Chair & Vice Chair Scrutiny Meetings	1 meeting & 1 scheduled
Informal Wellbeing Sessions	2 meetings & 1 scheduled
Personal Development Reviews	14 meetings
Mentoring Framework	2 Mentors & 5 Mentees
WLGA Community Leadership Programme	4 Members since 2022 (current programme concludes in March 2024)
Members Annual Reports	9 Reports

- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
By providing a democratic function with sufficient support and resources means Elected Members are provided with the support, guidance and training needed to operate effectively and compliantly. In addition, this will support them in their role within the community and representing their ward.
- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
Opportunities to maximise engagement by Elected Members in the range of training and support available to them will assist in meeting current and future demands of their roles.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
Any changes or improvements made to Elected Member support arrangements are done with a view to them being sustainable in the longer term and in recognition of the increasing complexity of the roles Members undertake.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
The content of the Member Development & Briefings programme is aimed to help them build on the solid grounding of the Induction programme by gaining further skills and knowledge across the Council.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The Member Development Programme and individual Member Briefings should encompass all the local, regional and national collaborations and partnerships in place, in which the Council has an interest. Blaenau Gwent Members sit on many outside bodies with other Councillors from across Wales to service these partnerships/bodies.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
All Council services are involved with the democratic functions of the Council. Forward Work Programmes and agendas are developed jointly with Elected Members and Officers. The change in the remit of the Scrutiny Committees to be more cross-cutting has also helped to facilitate this.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
The modernisation of the democratic arrangements enables Members and officers to attend meetings without the need for travelling.
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***
No assessment is required for this report.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The Head of Democratic Services presents an annual report to Democratic Services Committee and Council.
- 7.2 Evaluation is undertaken after each formal Scrutiny Committee meeting and any comments and considerations can be raised formally at the Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings as necessary or directly with the Head of Democratic Services and/or the Scrutiny Adviser.

- 7.3 Elected Member attendance is collected and monitored for all formal meetings and development sessions. Evaluations are also taken after all member development sessions.
- 7.4 Regular meetings also take place between the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democratic Services to assess and consider the existing arrangements for Elected Members and any issues of improvement and/or compliance.
- 7.5 The Head of Democratic Services is keen to look at ways of continually improving the service and the experience of Members and is always happy to receive constructive feedback in ways to take this forward for the benefit of all Members. A Member Survey may be considered in 2024-25 to gather data on all support currently provided from across the Council to see how this could be strengthened and improved.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of meeting: **11th March 2024**
Report Subject: **Multi Location Meeting Policy and Council Chamber Options Moving Forward**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Thomas, Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member Corporate Overview and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Gemma Wasley, Service Manager Performance and Democratic**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	22/02/24	27.02.24		11/02/24			21/03/24	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 For Democratic Services Committee to review the Council's Multi Location Meeting Policy (found at appendix 1), which is used to inform Members, Officers and the public how multi-location meeting arrangements and the electronic broadcasting of meetings will operate at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- 1.2 The Policy has been developed in line with legislative requirements as outlined by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 1.3 The Policy was first approved by Council in September 2022.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Since April 2021, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has come into force and enables Councils to operate multi-location meetings whereby Members, Officers, the public and Press are able to attend meetings physically or remotely.
- 2.2 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides that Councils are required to:
 - a) Electronically broadcast meetings (with effect from May 2022).
 - b) Make and publish arrangements to ensure that all Council, Cabinet, Committee, Sub-Committee and Joint Committee meetings may be attended remotely (i.e. enabling persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting) – also referred to as 'multi-location meetings'.
 - o Meetings must be capable of being held virtually, but each authority must decide whether their meetings will be held fully

virtually, partially virtually or as physical meetings (authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings).

- Participants in the meetings must be able to speak to and hear each other; and for meetings which are required to be broadcast (full Council meetings), participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other.

c) Publish all meeting documents on the Council's website, including notices, summonses, agendas, reports and background papers.

- A note of the meeting, including Members in attendance and decisions made, must be published within 7 working days of the meeting.
- Notice of meetings is no longer required to be posted at the Council's offices. However, copies of agendas and reports must be made available for the public if meetings are held physically.
- The Council is also required to make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access electronic documents, for example, by providing access to computers, copies of documents, or making documents available for inspection.

2.3 When considering arrangements for remote attendance or 'multi-location meetings', authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2.4 The statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. The guidance confirms the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.

2.5 The statutory guidance also stipulates that authorities should develop a policy setting out how the multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

2.6 **The Purpose of a Multi-Location Meeting**

The establishment of multi-location meetings has a number of benefits which the Council is looking to promote. Multi Location Meetings:

- Provide greater participation in meetings by the public and external participants;
- Make it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process observing discussions, recommendations and decisions are made in a transparent way;
- Ensure compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of making the authority more sustainable and resilient. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings. They also reduce both the reliance on paper and reduce the need for travel;
- Provide significant time and cost savings for councillors and officers particularly in relation to regional arrangements; and

- Make it easier for participants to take part in meetings when they have employment, family, caring or other commitments.

2.7 **Blaenau Gwent Council Multi-Location Meetings**

Multi-Location meeting facilities are available within two rooms at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale, within the Sir William Firth Room and Hot Mill Room.

2.7.1 The Multi-Location Meeting Policy is to be used to support all meetings of the Council, its Committees and member development sessions, whose participants are not all in the same physical place.

2.7.2 The Multi-Location Meeting Policy includes detail of:

- Legislative requirements;
- Detail of what a Multi Location Meeting is;
- The process in Blaenau Gwent;
- Broadcasting of Meetings;
- Recording of Meetings by Others;
- Exempt and Confidential items;
- Calendar of Meetings;
- Attendance;
- Meeting Procedures; and
- Chairing.

2.7.3 The Multi Location Meeting Policy is supported by a number of other documents that should be considered when either conducting or participating in a multi location meeting, including:

- The Council's Constitution;
- Hybrid Meeting Protocol; and
- Information Security Policy.

2.8 **Changes to the Multi Location Meeting Policy**

The first Blaenau Gwent Multi Location Meeting Policy was agreed by Council on 29th September 2022. Since this first iteration, a number of minor amendments have been made, following learning and to make it more efficient, the changes include:

Page Number on Policy, Section and Change Made	Reason for Change
Page 1 Contents Page Added	To ease use of the Policy and its contents
Page 2 Background – WG web link removed	Outdated link
Page 3 Blaenau Gwent Multi Location Policy – Changed name of room	Rooms have changed since the first iteration of the Policy. Reflects Council decision

Includes Council decision of how meetings are currently held	
<p>Page 3 Exempt or Confidential Items – Added a recommendation regarding exempt or confidential items</p>	Suggestion to improve how we operate for exempt or confidential items
<p>Page 4 Attendance at Meetings – Process amended</p> <p>Information now in bold, ‘If no response is received, then it will be assumed that invitees wish to attend via Microsoft Teams’.</p> <p>Process - Minimum number of physical attendees amended to minimum number of members in physical attendance</p> <p>Table - Scrutiny Committees added, ‘(meetings to be held at the Chair’s discretion)’</p> <p>Table - Member Development Sessions – Change from all meetings as hybrid to fully remote unless requested</p>	<p>Change to process to make it more efficient and easier to collect responses directly through email rather than contacting Democratic Services by phone.</p> <p>Bold to highlight the process.</p> <p>The Multi Location Meeting policy is in place for Members and not officers.</p> <p>Bracket added to reflect decisions of Chairs when conducting their meetings.</p> <p>Change made following majority of Member Development Sessions being held fully remote and also reduces administrative burden on staff</p>
<p>Page 5 Procedures at Meetings – included legislative requirements regarding member cameras</p>	Under legislation Members should be seen and heard in meetings and members should have their cameras on during meeting
<p>Page 6 Attendance at Meetings Whilst Out of the Country – Added a link to the Blaenau Gwent Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy</p>	Ease of access to this policy
<p>Page 6 Chairing – Section amended from, ‘Chairs and vice-chairs are encouraged to attend meetings in person in order to benefit from the direct support of Democratic Services’ to, ‘As hybrid meeting arrangements have been operational for some time, Chairs</p>	Amendment reflects current processes.

and vice-chairs are encouraged to manage meetings how they feel most comfortable whether that be in person or remotely. Support and advice from advisors and Democratic Services are provided in either scenario, when required'.	
Page 7 Supporting Documents	Added link to updated Constitution

2.9 **Future Options for the Location of Committee Meetings**

- 2.9.1 Since the Covid pandemic in 2020, rooms at the General Offices have been used to facilitate a Mass Vaccination Centre which brought in income to the Council.
- 2.9.2 Recently the ABUHB have vacated the space at the General Offices. This offers an opportunity for the reconsideration of a venue to accommodate a Council Chamber.
- 2.9.3 The Jack Williams Conference Hall, located on the ground floor of the General Offices is a large space that could accommodate a Council Chamber, or there are potentials to consider other space for a Council Chamber if needed.
- 2.9.4 A number of factors would need to be considered and agreed before the establishment of a new Council Chamber.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Multi Location Meeting Policy** (appendix 1) –

Option 1a

Recommend approval of the Multi Location Meeting Policy at Council and for it to be used to support all future democratic meetings and member sessions.

Option 1b

Make amendments to the content of the Multi Location Meeting Policy, noting the legislative requirements, before recommending to Council for approval, and for it to be used to support all future democratic meetings and member sessions.

3.2 **Establishment of a Working Group to consider Options for a Council Chamber** –

Option 2a

For Democratic Services Committee to recommend to Council for approval the establishment of a Members working group to look at requirements, costs and potential alternative options for a Council Chamber and provide the findings back to Council for consideration and approval. Member Work Group Template is found at appendix 2.

Option 2b

For Democratic Services to recommend to Council to maintain the current arrangements for Committee meetings.

4. Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

4.1 The Multi Location Meeting Policy is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

4.2 The statutory guidance also stipulates that authorities should develop a policy setting out how the multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

5. Implications Against Each Option

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

5.1 Multi Location Meeting Policy –

5.1.1 The resources required to support multi location meetings have already been established. No further investment is required at this time.

5.2 Council Chamber –

5.2.1 There will be costs associated with creating a Council Chamber at the General Offices should members wish to pursue this option or at an alternative location including:

- Cost to relocate the hybrid meeting system, or the purchasing of a new system;
- Electric and socket installation;
- Wifi;
- Furniture;
- Room Design;
- Acoustic works and sound enhancement (replace windows or alternative to reduce noise)

5.2.2 *Please note - any works at the General Offices would need to be approved by CADW and no work can disturb the current building design. There may be costs associated with undertaken work with CADW.*

5.2.3 If it is agreed for works to be undertaken at the General Offices, or an alternative location, a budget code would need to be established as there is currently no budget to support this type of work.

5.3 Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.3.1 There is a risk to the Council if the Multi Location Meeting Policy is not adopted in line with Legislation.

5.3.2 The Council is required to offer democratic meetings to be held on a hybrid or remote basis. **Authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings.**

5.4 ***Legal***

5.4.1 The Multi Location Policy has been developed following Welsh Government guidance and the requirements as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

5.4.2 There is a requirement for all meetings of Council to be broadcast live. This will be a future development for the Council.

5.5 ***Human Resources***

5.5.1 Democratic Services staff are trained in use of the hybrid meeting system and in operating multi location meetings. However, the staff resource to operate the system is significant, therefore a minimum attendance at the General Offices is required.

5.5.2 Further training is being sought on the broadcasting of live meetings as there is a statutory requirement for all Council meetings to be broadcast live (the current arrangements for recording meetings and uploading the recordings onto the website are suitable for all other democratic meetings).

6. **Supporting Evidence**

Performance Information and Data

6.1 As part of the Council's performance management information the number of attendees at committees and those attending virtually or physically is recorded.

6.1.1 Data collated from June 2023 to January 2024. Prior to this the system was not being used and all meetings were held remotely using Microsoft Teams.

6.1.2 Committees not offered as hybrid during the period:

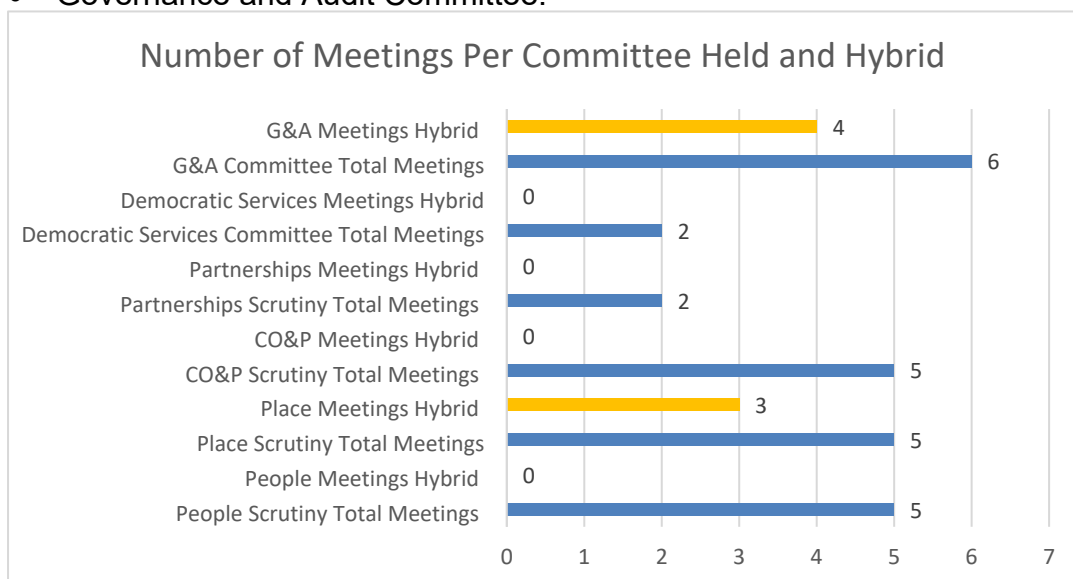
- Council;
- Planning Committee; and
- Licensing Committee.

6.1.3 Committees offered as hybrid during the period:

- Place Scrutiny Committee;
- Partnerships Scrutiny Committee;
- People Scrutiny Committee;
- Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- Democratic Services Committee; and
- Governance & Audit Committee.

6.1.4 Since June 2023, 28% of meetings offered as hybrid have been held hybrid. The chart below shows that only two committees have conducted their meetings using a hybrid format:

- Place Scrutiny Committee; and
- Governance and Audit Committee.



6.1.5 The table below shows member attendance at meetings held as hybrid:

Month	Hybrid Committee	Number of Members at the GO	Number of Members on Teams	Total Meeting Attendance
21 st June 2023	Governance & Audit Committee	3 out of 8*	5 out of 8*	100%
20 th June 2023	Place Scrutiny Committee	7 out of 9	2 out of 9	100%
12 th July 2023	Governance & Audit Committee	2** out of 8*	3 out of 8*	62.5%
August 2023	Summer Recess			
20 th September 2023	Governance & Audit Committee	3 out of 8*	5 out of 8*	100%
5 th September 2023	Place Scrutiny Committee	4 out of 9	3 out of 9	77.7%
18 th October 2023	Governance & Audit Committee	2** out of 8*	4 out of 8*	75%
November 2023	No hybrid meeting held; all meetings fully remote			
5 th December 2023	Place Scrutiny Committee	4 out of 9	5 out of 9	100%
January 2024	No hybrid meeting held; all meetings fully remote			

*Governance and Audit Committee had a vacancy therefore between June and November the total number on the Committee was 8 and from December onwards it was 9.

**As per the multi-location meeting policy, 3 members indicated attendance at the General Offices but then attended remotely

6.1.6 The table below shows the number of meetings offered as Hybrid but held fully on Teams and Member Attendance:

Meeting Date	Committee Meeting Held Fully Remote	Member Attendance
22 nd June 2023	Corporate Overview & Performance	8 Members - 88.8%
5 th July 2023	Special Corporate Overview & Performance	8 Members - 88.8%
13 th July 2023	Democratic Services Committee	9 Members plus 4 Chairs/Vice-Chairs - 100%
18 th July 2023	People Scrutiny Committee	9 Members - 100%
August 2023	Summer Recess	
14 th September 2023	Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny	8 Members - 88.8%
19 th September 2023	People Scrutiny	9 Members - 100%
12 th October 2023	Corporate Overview & Performance	9 Members - 100%
18 th October 2023	Governance & Audit	6 Members - 66.6%
19 th October 2023	Special Partnerships	8 Members - 88.8%
13 th November 2023	People Scrutiny	5 Members - 55.5%
16 th November 2023	Partnerships Scrutiny	9 Members - 100%
1 st December 2023	Governance & Audit	7 Members - 77.7%
6 th December 2023	Corporate Overview & Performance	8 Members - 88.8%
16 th January 2024	Place Scrutiny	9 Members - 100%
17 th January 2024	Governance & Audit	6 Members - 66.6%
18 th January 2024	Corporate Overview & Performance	7 Members - 77.7%
30 th January 2024 (10am)	People Scrutiny	7 Members - 77.7%
30 th January 2024 (12:15pm)	People Scrutiny	6 Members - 66.6%

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Multi Location Meetings provide greater participation in meetings by the public and external participants.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Multi Location Meetings:

- Make it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process observing discussions, recommendations and decisions are made in a transparent way; and

- Make it easier for participants to take part in meetings when they have employment, family, caring or other commitments.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The hybrid meeting system and Multi Location Meeting Policy supports long term thinking for the Council and provides future proofing for democratic meetings that support digital infrastructure.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Multi Location Meeting Policy and Information Security Policy have been developed to prevent issues arising from the inappropriate use of the Council's ICT.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Arrangements can be made in future for partner organisations to utilise the hybrid meeting system at the General Offices.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Training and support for managing the hybrid system will be provided across Council Services, such as Business Support, so that meetings, outside of the democratic arrangements, can operate on a hybrid basis.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Multi Location Meetings:

- Ensure compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of making the authority more sustainable and resilient. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings. They also reduce both the reliance on paper and reduce the need for travel; and
- Provide significant time and cost savings for councillors and officers particularly in relation to regional arrangements.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

The Multi Location Meeting Policy provides alternative options for attendance at meetings, supporting those with caring or work needs as well as those who may not be able to attend meetings physically. Reasonable adjustments can be considered, on a case by case basis, to support the engagement and participation in meetings by members, officers and the public.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Democratic Services Committee will have responsibility for the reviewing of the Multi Location Meeting Policy before approval at Council.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 Multi Location Meeting Policy
- Appendix 2 Task and Finish Group Template
- Constitution - [The Council Constitution | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)
- Hybrid Meeting Protocol



Hybrid Meetings
Protocol.docx

- [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)
- Information Security Policy



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Blaenau Gwent Multi-Location Meetings Policy



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Background

Since April 2021, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has come into force and enables Councils to operate multi-location meetings whereby Members, Officers, the public and Press are able to attend meetings physically or remotely.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides that Councils are required to:

- a) Electronically broadcast meetings (with effect from May 2022).
- b) Make and publish arrangements to ensure that all Council, Cabinet, Committee, Sub-Committee and Joint Committee meetings may be attended remotely (i.e. enabling persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting) – also referred to as ‘multi-location meetings’:
 - Meetings must be capable of being held virtually, but each authority must decide whether their meetings will be held fully virtually, partially virtually (where some participants are in the same physical location, whilst others join the meeting virtually, also referred to as ‘hybrid meetings’) or as physical meetings (authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings).
 - Participants in the meetings must be able to speak to and hear each other; and for meetings which are required to be broadcast (full Council meetings), participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other.
- c) Publish all meeting documents on the Council’s website, including notices, summonses, agendas, reports and background papers.
 - A note of the meeting, including Members in attendance and decisions made, must be published within 7 working days of the meeting.
 - Notice of meetings is no longer required to be posted at the Council’s offices. However, copies of agendas and reports must be made available for the public if meetings are held physically.
 - The Council is also required to make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access electronic documents, for example, by providing access to computers, copies of documents, or making documents available for inspection.

When considering arrangement for remote attendance or ‘multi-location meetings’, authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. The guidance confirms the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.

The statutory guidance also stipulates that authorities should develop a policy setting out how the multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

What is a Multi-Location Meeting?

A Multi-Location Meeting is a meeting whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Some of the participants may be physically located in the meeting venue whilst others join from their home or other remote location.

The Welsh Government Statutory Guidance stipulates that local democracy and the needs of the public in engaging with multi-location meetings are an important consideration in deciding where and when meetings will be convened.

It is also acknowledged that some participants may prefer physical meetings due to protected characteristics or circumstances which limits their ability to participate online. Some participants however may wish to join council meetings remotely and from another location as a matter of default because they have working or caring responsibilities, protected characteristics, which make attending meetings in person difficult.

The Purpose of a Multi-Location Meeting

The establishment of multi-location meetings has a number of benefits which the Council is looking to promote.

Multi Location Meetings:

- Provide greater participation in meetings by the public and external participants;
- Make it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process observing discussions, recommendations and decisions are made in a transparent way;
- Ensure compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of making the authority more sustainable and resilient. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings. They also reduce both the reliance on paper and reduce the need for travel;
- Provide significant time and cost savings for councillors and officers particularly in relation to regional arrangements; and
- Make it easier for participants to take part in meetings when they have employment, family, caring or other commitments.

Blaenau Gwent Council Multi-Location Meetings

There are two rooms at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale, with multi-location meeting capability to enable participants to attend and fully participate remotely or in person. The room is also able to accommodate a designated public gallery to allow the public and Press to attend in person if required. The section of the Multi Location Meeting Policy, 'Attendance at Meetings', identifies the current arrangements for holding Committee meetings.

All Committees may be viewed at: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) please select the chosen committee to view from the options provided.

This Multi-Location Meeting Policy is to be used to support all meetings of the Council, its Committees and member development sessions, whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Such meetings can either be held:

- Hybrid – with some participants joining through remote means (Microsoft Teams) and some attending physically in the same place as others. Hybrid Meetings will be conducted and broadcasted via the Council's hybrid meeting solution from the Council Committee Room. These meetings will be recorded and uploaded, within two days of the meeting taking place, onto the Council's website (apart from meetings which are either partly or wholly confidential in nature).
- Entirely Remote – whereby all participants are taking part via remote means (Microsoft Teams) and recorded and uploaded, within two days of the meeting taking place, onto the Council's website (apart from meetings which are either partly or wholly confidential in nature).

Broadcasting Meetings

The Act requires for all Full Council meetings to be broadcast live with the broadcast being shown on the Council's website. The process for this is being sourced for future use. All other formal Committee meetings will be recorded and then uploaded to the Council's website within two days of the meetings taking place. All recordings can be found here [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) please select the chosen committee to view from the options provided.

Recording of Meetings by Others

In meetings which are open to the public, filming and use of social media is permitted during meetings so long as there is no disturbance to the conduct of the meeting.

Exempt or Confidential Items

On occasions Committees will be required to consider exempt information in which the public and Press will be excluded from the meeting, both physically and remotely.

When this happens, the agenda will be scheduled to ensure that all exempt items are included at the end of the meeting in order to minimise any disruption to the meeting. There will also be two meeting invites sent to participants:

- Electronic meeting invite 1 will be for the open part of the agenda and will include Members, Officers, the Press and public. This section will be recorded and uploaded to the Council website within two days of the meeting taking place.

- Electronic meeting invite 2 will be for the exempt part of the agenda and will ONLY include those Members and Officers required to this part of the meeting. This section of the meeting will be recorded but WILL NOT be uploaded onto the website and will be kept in a locked electronic folder only accessible by Democratic Services Staff and CLT.

**note a transcript for both meetings will be available following the meeting, but ONLY those invited to the meeting of the exempt items will be able to access this.*

It is recommended that all members and officers present for an exempt item are either located alone where they cannot be overheard, or wear headphones to ensure that confidential information is not heard by anyone outside of the meeting.

Calendar of Meetings

A programme of meetings will be developed annually which identifies when, where and how each of the Council’s meetings will be held. This may be subject to change during the year for operational reasons.

Attendance at Meetings

Invitations to meetings will be provided electronically and will provide details of the meeting, its location and timings. Certain meetings will include links to enable the participants to join remotely should they wish to do so. On receipt of the invitation, and if requested, participants will need to indicate their intentions to attend the meeting physically or remotely to enable any necessary administrative and support arrangements to be put in place by Democratic Services.

Process

Democratic Services will email all those invited to attend a Committee meeting seeking confirmation of whether invitees wish to attend the meeting either via MS Teams, or in person at the General Offices. This email will be sent in advance of the meeting.

Please note that in order for the meeting to proceed on a hybrid basis, a minimum of 3 Members of the Committee are required to physically attend the meeting at the General Offices. If this number is not met, the meeting will proceed via Microsoft Teams. **If no response is received, then it will be assumed that invitees wish to attend via Microsoft Teams.**

A few days before the meeting, Democratic Services will inform the Committee of whether the meeting will be held as hybrid or fully remote.

Owing to the necessary administrative and system support that is required to hold hybrid meetings a minimum number of physical attendees will be put in place for each meeting. If the minimum number is not met, the meeting will be held fully via remote methods.

Meetings are also attended by a range of participants other than committee members. Officers and committee members should notify Democratic Services of additional participants who will be attending with details and contact information of the participant. The external participants will be contacted by Democratic Services to confirm their attendance, explain how they can join the meeting either as a physical or remote participant and the meeting procedures. If the external participant is joining the meeting remotely an electronic meeting invitation similar to that of other participants will be sent.

The minimum physical attendance number of members (excluding Officers and external participants) will be in place as follows:

Meeting	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Committees (meetings to be held at the Chair’s discretion) • Governance and Audit Committee • Democratic Services Committee 	All meetings will be offered as hybrid. Minimum number of physical member attendees – 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Committee • Licensing Committee 	All meetings will be offered as fully remote.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Council 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member development sessions 	<p>All meetings will be offered as fully remote unless a specific request is made for the session to be hybrid.</p> <p>Minimum number of physical member attendees – 5</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other 	<p>All meetings will be offered as hybrid.</p> <p>Minimum number of physical member attendees – 5</p>

Members of the public will also be able to attend physical meetings at the General Offices. In the event that the number of members of the public needs to be limited then seats will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Members of the public who wish to view a meeting which is to be fully remote should make a request to the Head of Democratic Services, by noon three days before the remote meeting, to enable appropriate arrangements to be made.

Procedure at Meetings

Those participants attending the meeting remotely should also ensure that they have appropriate internet connectivity to join and maintain their attendance throughout the meeting.

If attending physically and using a laptop the person should ensure that it is on mute and the sound is off **(this is imperative to stop sound feedback)**.

All those participating in the meeting, physically or remotely, will need to indicate when they would like to speak, via physical hands up in the Committee Room or hands up on Teams. Only when brought in by the Chair may someone speak. They should remember then to unmute their microphone when speaking and to re mute when finished. Participations must speak clearly and into the microphone.

For all meetings, Members are requested to leave their cameras on throughout the duration of the meeting. This is to ensure members of the Press and public are aware of who the elected representatives are in each meeting. This is also a legal requirement under Chapter 4 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Section 47, *‘Attendance at local authority meetings - in the case of meetings of a principal council required to be broadcast under section 46 (electronic broadcasts), or any other local authority meetings required to be broadcast by regulations made under that section, Members to speak to and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by each other. Officers will only turn on their cameras if they are speaking and members of the public and Press will be asked to keep their cameras off for the duration of the meeting.*

It is inevitable that there will be occasions when a remote participant may need to disable their camera due to poor connection/internet issues. If this occurs the participant should use the chat function to inform the meeting Chair and Democratic Services staff of the issue.

Reports will not be shown on screen. Only on rare occasions, such as providing a presentation, will the information be shown on screen. Please see section above on the legal requirement for members to be seen when attending local authority meetings.

All attendees are encouraged to use their Council devices at meetings so that agendas and papers can be viewed online.

A participant at a meeting wishing to speak in Welsh is required to contact Democratic Services at least 3 days in advance of a meeting so that the necessary translation arrangements can be made.

All meetings will be facilitated by a Democratic Services Officer.

Attendance at Meetings Whilst out of the Country

Members wishing to attend meetings whilst out of the Country and using their own personal or Council devices will be able to do so by accessing free Wi-Fi facilities as the Council will not be able to reimburse costs. However, to enable access to Council meetings abroad the Information Security Policy states that approval must be sought from SRS, the SIRO and Data Protection Governance Officer before taking equipment abroad. Information will be sought to understand, where the device will be securely stored/locked, what Wi-Fi will be accessed and is it secure, international data transfer and the risk of the device being lost/stolen.

Should Members wish to access meetings using mobile phones (Council or Personal) or other personal devices such as laptops, iPads etc the Council will not be able to reimburse call or data costs. This access would therefore be a matter for the Member and subject to the Council's existing BYOD (bring your own device) policy. Please note, no documentation or personal information should be downloaded to a personal device.

Technical support on any Council supported devices whilst abroad will not be provided by the Council's ICT provider SRS, or Democratic Services Officers.

<http://intranet/media/186101/Blaenau-Gwent-BYOD-Policy-v032- FINAL.docx>

Record of Attendance

The Democratic Services Officer will record attendance of each committee member and participant at the meeting and record attendance in the minutes of the meeting. Committee Members are to inform the relevant Democratic Services if they are unable to attend a meeting and their apologies will be recorded at the meeting and published in the minutes of the meeting.

Quorum

The quorum of a meeting is one quarter of the voting Members unless specified otherwise within the Council's Constitution. The quorum shall include those attending remotely and physically; providing they are able to speak and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by others when actively participating in proceedings.

If the numbers present fall below the quorum required, the meeting ends immediately.

Voting

It is acknowledged that technical issues may dictate the method of voting but voting will comply with the voting rules set out in the Council Procedure Rules. Methods of voting include electronic voting, a roll call vote and show of hands (either physical or virtual). Committee members should ensure that they have been present for the discussion and debate on agenda items so as to be able to exercise their vote.

The result of any vote will be announced immediately following the vote by either the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer.

Chairing Meetings

It is understood that chairing a multi-location meeting is very different to chairing a face-to-face only meeting and the job of the Chair is particularly challenging. As hybrid meeting arrangements have been operational for some time, Chairs and vice-chairs are encouraged to manage meetings how they feel most comfortable whether that be in person or remotely. Support and advice from advisors and Democratic Services are provided in either scenario, when required.

In general Chairs of meetings should:

- Ensure they are prepared for the meeting.
- Ensure all participants are able to access the meeting and can see and hear each other.
- Introduce themselves and others to members of the public who may be present.
- Check occasionally to ensure no one has been lost due to technical difficulties and provide support to those participants experiencing challenges.
- Remember that all participants may want to participate whether attending physically or remotely. If attending physically, ensure those attending remotely are able to contribute and if attending remotely ensure that you ask if anyone attending physically from the Committee Room would like to contribute.

- Ask all those attending, whether physically or remotely, to mute their microphones and to only take them off mute when brought in by the Chair. All will then need to re mute once they have spoken.

When opening the meeting inform everyone that the meeting will be recorded and will be uploaded onto the Council’s website (for Council meetings the recording will be live broadcast).

If any public or Press are in attendance physically at the General Offices inform them that the public seating area is not generally filmed, however, by entering the meeting room and using the seating area they are consenting to being filmed and the possible use of these images being used on the website and/or for training purposes.

As identified above also note that filming is allowed to be undertaken by those seated in public gallery and again, by sitting in the seating area, they consent to being filmed.

Disruptive Behaviour – If a member of the public interrupt’s proceedings, the Chair will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chair will order their removal from the meeting. With regards to Elected Members, the procedure outlined within the Council’s Constitution will apply.

Chat Function Use

Participants should only use the chat function if there is something they need the meeting to be aware of i.e. are having sound issues, or need to leave the meeting early etc.

The chat facility **is not** to be used for discussions, as all discussions must be made verbally in the meeting for the sake of individuals observing the meeting and / or the meeting recording if a recording is being made.

The chat is not to be used for other reasons. Be mindful that everyone in the meeting can see the chat content.

Supporting Documents

This guidance Policy should be read in conjunction with the Councils Constitution, Hybrid Meeting Protocol and Information Security Policy.

Constitution – [The Council Constitution | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Note – the Constitution will be undertaking a review. The arrangements outlined in this report will be reflected in a future Constitution

Hybrid Meeting Protocol –



Hybrid Meetings
Protocol.docx

Information Security Policy –



Information-Security-Policy-v12-FINAL.d

Task and Finish Group Template

In order to set up a Task and Finish Group please ensure that this template is completed in full. The relevant Committee will consider this information when deciding if the group is required.

Committee	Democratic Services Committee
Title of Task and Finish Group	Considerations for a Future Council Chamber
Is a Council Policy currently in place? If so, please state which one	Multi Location Meeting Policy
Which Council Priority would the Task and Finish Group Support?	An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place
Why is there a need to set up a Task and Finish Group?	Enquiries have been made by some members for consideration of a new Council Chamber. The group would consider all of the requirements, options and costs before presenting these to Council.
What is the Scope of the Task and Finish Group? What will be considered and what will not?	<p>A number of factors would need to be considered and agreed before the room could be utilised as a Council Chamber, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sound in the room is poor owing to the location of the building by a main road and the need for window replacement; • The acoustics in the room are poor. An acoustics audit has been undertaken in the room with recommendations on how the acoustics could be improved. To note, the sound and acoustics will not be fully improved unless the windows are changed; • The room is currently used for income generation. By using the room as a Council Chamber, would the room still be useable by others to hire; • The hybrid meeting system has recently been moved into two rooms at the General Offices to support income generation. The system would need to be moved should a new Council Chamber be identified; • Hybrid meetings would still be required under legislation, even if all members and officers were in physical attendance, as there is a requirement to make all meetings accessible to those that cannot attend a meeting physically and meetings also need to be recorded and included on the website; • When the Jack Williams Conference Hall was previously considered as a location for the Council Chamber it was planned for the system to be mobile

	<p>so that it could be moved to utilise the room in different ways. With the electrical work that would be required this arrangement would not be possible and the chamber set up would be permanent. Consideration could be given to utilising half of the room as a Council Chamber and the remaining space to be used for other meetings;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room set up and requirements; • Overall costs and the Grade II listing of the building would need to be considered should any changes be made to the Jack Williams Conference Hall; and • Are there any other alternative locations that could be used as a Council Chamber in future.
What outcome are you seeking from holding a Task and Finish Group?	<p>Either for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An identified location, room and system requirements and costs of a new Council Chamber for consideration by Council; or • Recognition that a new Council Chamber is not feasible at this time.
Which Officers will support the Task and Finish Group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Services • Corporate Landlord • Finance • External partners to be identified for acoustics, system, locations etc
Suggested Member Representation, e.g. Ward specific	Cross party membership of six members to be suggested by the Democratic Services Committee and agreed by Council
How many meetings will be held and how often?	Meetings to be held monthly with the number of meetings to be determined by the group
What is the anticipated timescale for completion?	6 months
How often will you report back to committee?	A report on progress can be brought to each committee of Democratic Services Committee before approval at Council.