

Council Chamber Streaming Report	20th June 2022
Corporate Policy and Resources Committee	

Linkage to Council Strategy	
Strategic Theme	Innovation and Transformation
Outcome	Improved service efficiency
Lead Officer	Head of ICT
Cost: (If applicable)	

1.0 Introduction

At the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee of 24th May 2022, a proposal by Councillor Wilson, and seconded by Alderman Hillis, and agreed by the Committee, was made to have the costs to live streaming of Council and Committee meetings be brought to the CPR committee meeting of June 2022 for consideration.

2.0 Background

Since March 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in an increased reliance on technology to facilitate the continuation of Council business, with the introduction of online hybrid Council meetings within the Chamber.

Also, whilst the Covid pandemic's worst elements are receding at the time of writing, the provision of these hybrid meetings, allowing Members and staff to join both in a home environment or in person at the Council Chamber, may continue to be the new normality.

The Committee has asked that the cost of live streaming of Council and Committee meeting be collated for consideration.

3.0 Detail.

Council Chamber

Since May 2020, Full Council meetings and Committee meetings have been conducted in the Council Chamber, using several different technologies to assist in Members maintaining the democratic process. Generally, the Members may attend the Cloonavin offices in person or avail of the Microsoft Teams videoconferencing facilities remotely, resulting in a hybrid use of technology.

Also, at that time, the technology was composed of a Bosch microphone system and data projectors, both acquired some 5 years earlier. In September 2020, there was consideration given to the belief that, whilst the technology was functional and allowed meetings to be held, the setup was worthy of a review.

After several options were proposed to Council, it was directed that we upgrade the existing data projectors and Bosch microphone system (see appendix 1), whilst also allowing us to avail of improved integration with the Microsoft Teams technology.

From those initial meetings, involving a plethora of new technologies, Members, Officers and external bodies have very quickly adapted to this new world of technology and we have had largely technical glitch-free meetings. However, Council is always endeavouring to improve the technological aspect of these meetings.

Practical Chamber ICT challenge

There are, on average, two Council meetings per week, ranging from the Full Council meeting to the Planning, Corporate Policy and Resources, Finance, Audit, Leisure & Development and Environmental Services Committees, mostly occurring on a monthly basis.

In the early months of the Covid outbreak, organising online meetings was a challenge, both from a technical and a personnel perspective. The ICT Team, working in

conjunction with Member Services, required a number of staff to allow for the smooth running of the meetings. The requirement from an ICT perspective was to allow for the setup, training, support for technical issues, and to provide ongoing maintenance of the systems within the Council Chamber. Other meeting locations that facilitate hybrid meetings are also available in the Cloonavin building and the other legacy Council headquarters (see appendix 2).

The ICT personnel requirement has now been streamlined from the initial Covid pandemic timeline of requiring several staff to currently requiring one full-time member of ICT staff to provide the support. A further report to CPR, for Member's decision, will consider the need to examine the structures within the ICT Team to reflect the new working reality.

4.0 Other factors for consideration

It is anticipated that the live streaming of meetings will increase the individual personal profile of those in attendance, particularly if they choose to initiate the camera feature on their computer equipment. Indeed, all individuals in the Chamber will automatically be online.

The Chamber makes very important and difficult decisions, affecting the lives of our ratepayers and public. Therefore, Members, Council officials and external individuals may have concerns over the live recording and retention of these images. Consideration should be given to consultation with those affected by this possible change in practise.

5.0 Costs associated with live streaming

Since the beginning of the Covid pandemic in March 2020, there has been an ongoing incremental acquisition of ICT hardware and software as equipment became obsolete, with associated integration of these enhanced replacement products in to the new configuration. These purchases reflected the need for an improved user experience for the individual Chairpersons of meetings, Members, Council official and other participants. Such fixed costs are required, irrespective of whether or not Members

may choose to livestream to the wider ratepayers and public. Concurrently, the developing internal ICT expertise of relevant software products has allowed Council to keep costs to a minimum.

Therefore, the cost of moving to a live streaming environment is now relatively minimal.

The primary expenditure would be in computer hardware in the form of a high specification computer, costing approximately £1700. Miscellaneous costs are associated with software and licensing, such as the use of a Youtube channel and other software security products. To enhance the stability of the broadband platform, we would also wish to take this opportunity to install further broadband backup technology (see Appendix 3 for detail).

6.0 For Consideration.

Indicative costs of the live streaming of meetings have been outlined as requested by Members. Consideration to be given to the live streaming of Council and Committee meetings, consultation with relevant stakeholders being an integral part of the process.

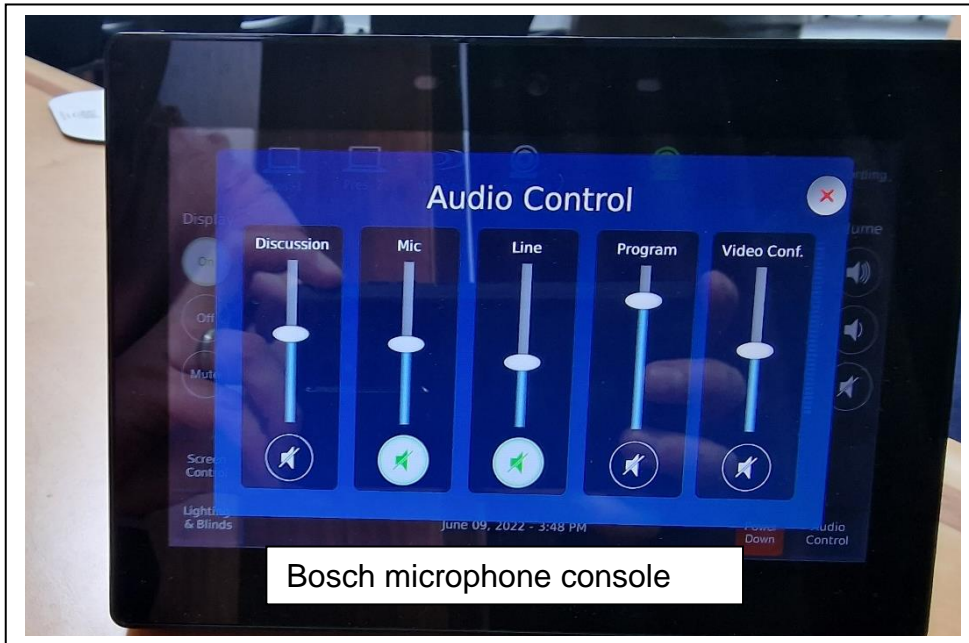
7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 (Chamber photos)





Bosch microphone system server



Bosch microphone console

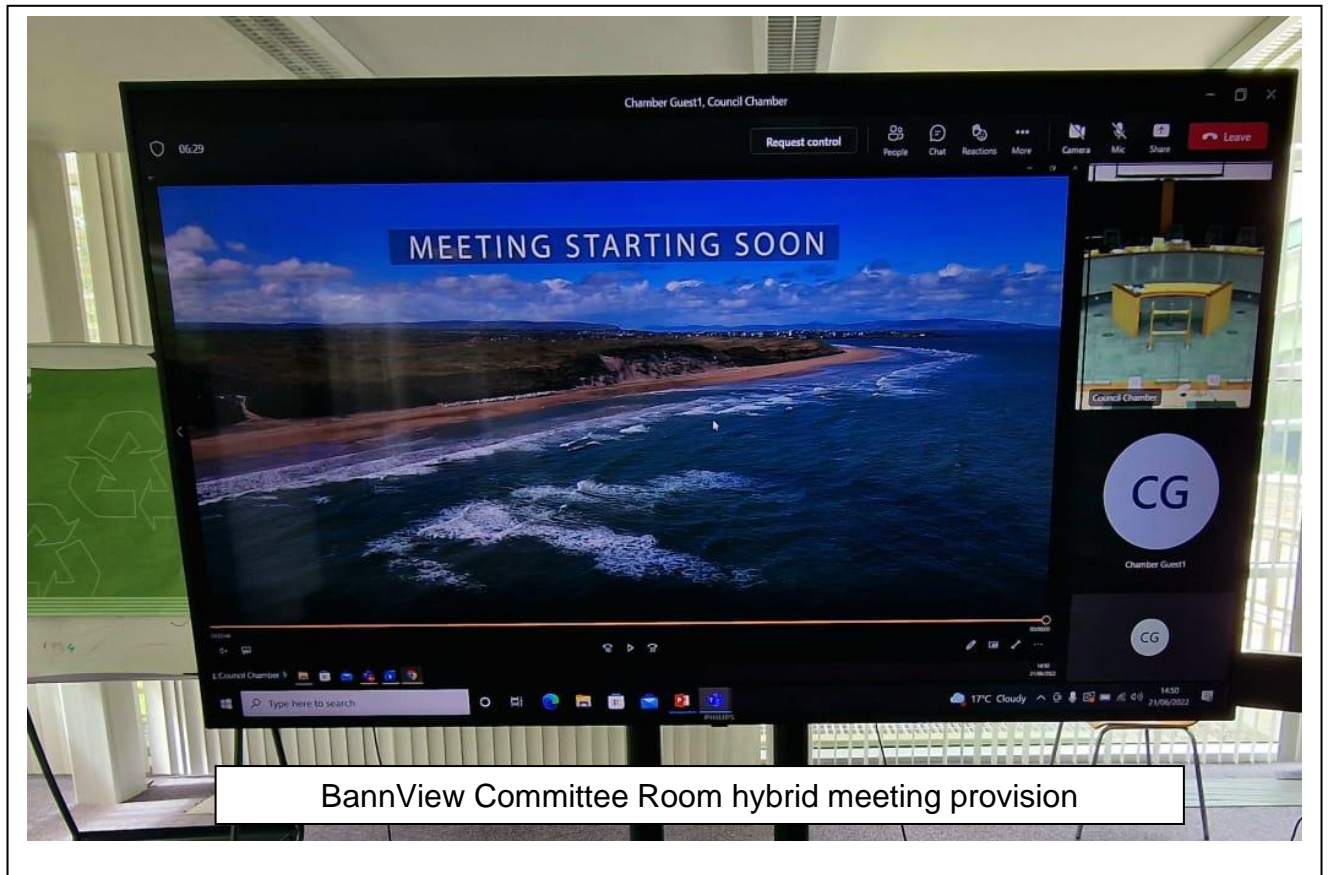


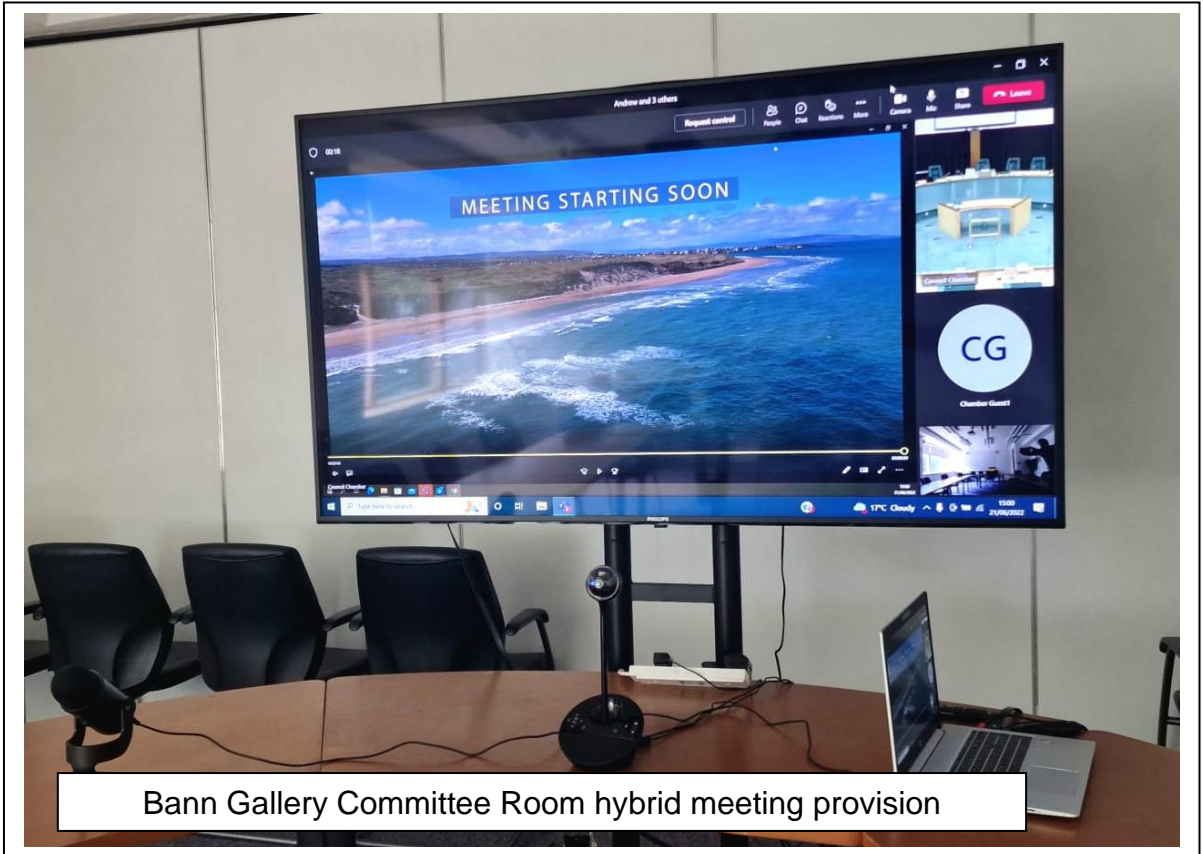
Enhanced camera provision

Appendix 2

Other Meeting facilities

Council ICT have worked to improve the facilities in each of the four main Council locations with the aspiration to allow online meetings in all the meeting room facilities. This requires technological improvements provided by ICT, additional training and support for members and staff. From a more positive financial perspective, it is expected the outcome will facilitate less requirements for unnecessary travel and hence, saving both time and cost.





Bann Gallery Committee Room hybrid meeting provision

Appendix 3

Streaming costs

- 1 High Specification PC setup for Graphics £1700 approx.
- 1 separate dedicated broadband line £53.00 per month

