

# Hybrid technology at Committee meetings

## Background

- The emergency legislation which permitted council meetings to take place virtually expired on 6 May 2021 and were not capable of being extended. Since 7 May, councils have been required to meet physically in order to conduct their business.
- The call for evidence conducted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about arrangements to meet remotely or in hybrid format closed on 17 June 2021. Local authorities hope that Primary legislation will be brought in, giving councils the flexibility to hold remote/hybrid meetings.
- Both Scotland and Wales already have legislation permitting remote and hybrid meetings.

## Present situation

- Legislation requires all decision makers to be physically present at the meeting.
- The requirements in terms of officer attendance are less clear, but ADSO/LLG guidance recommend that as a minimum to have those officers directly supporting the meeting as a whole attend physically. This might include the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer, a Democratic Services Officer, plus key Chief Officers (depending on the meeting in question).
- Therefore hybrid technology would enable officers below chief officer level to attend remotely, as well as any external presenters, and, for example, Cabinet Members could attend Scrutiny meetings remotely.

The LGA have identified the following as key benefits of hybrid meetings:

- Increased attendance by both councillors and residents, ‘levelling the playing field’ for disabled participants or those with caring responsibilities, increasing transparency and reducing barriers to democratic accountability;
- Reduced costs, reduced travel time and reduced carbon footprint (one council estimated a reduction of 6 tons of carbon emissions over the last year);
- Flexibility in times of emergency without an automatic need to rely on delegated officer powers;
- Reduced barriers to diverse and inclusive councils, allowing equal participation and reducing barriers to engaging with public meetings or standing for election.

# Public-I Connect Hybrid system

- Public I have already installed hybrid technology in 80-90 councils in the UK.
- Costs around £3500 to £4500.
- Three months lead in time for installation.



Participants in the Council Chamber can see the remote participants using large visual displays and hear them through the in-room audio.



Remote participants can see a wide shot of the chamber. When a participant in the chamber speaks, the camera focuses on them and their name is displayed.

# How it works

- Links participants in the Council chamber with remote participants on video conference. Both sides can see and hear each other, and both sides can present.
- Fully integrates with both mod.gov and existing webcasting arrangements.
- Chairman and/or Dem Services will have a tablet in order to control the Zoom aspect of the meeting.
- Example can be viewed at: [https://tandridge.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/562808](https://tandridge.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/562808)

# Questions?