

Report

To:	Finance and Corporate Resources Committee
Date:	10 November 2021
Prepared by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Live Streamed Meetings - Subtitles
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1. Purpose of this Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the current arrangements for Live Streamed meetings and future arrangements

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of this report be noted; and
- (2) that the updated arrangements for providing accessible meetings be noted.

3 Background

3.1. A few councils in Scotland have been live-streaming or webcasting Committee meetings for some years, e.g., City of Edinburgh, Highland Council, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar. Other councils across Scotland decided to record or live-stream meetings as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2. The other councils do not provide subtitles on recorded meetings other than those automatically available on YouTube. South Lanarkshire Council initially were unable to live stream meetings and instead recorded meetings which were subsequently subtitled by an external provider of subtitle services before uploading to YouTube. The Council has since rolled out live streaming of meetings and all Council, Committee and Forum meetings are now livestreamed.

4. Current Position

4.1. The option to professionally subtitle meetings is currently causing delays in the process of uploading the subtitled version of meetings and, in addition, is proving costly. Based on costs to date, a full year cost will be in the range of £80,000 to £100,000. This does not include the significant level of employee time taken to check the work before uploading. It should be noted that there is no legal requirement to subtitle live streamed meetings and no other council has done this.

4.2. The automatic subtitles, available via the YouTube platform, works well for other authorities and this, together with the formal minutes of meetings, provides a good sense of the meeting content. Officers view this as a good option, improving on the speed of information being available.

- 4.3 Additional support, in the form of BSL signers, is provided at any meeting attended by Councillor Ferguson. This does not currently apply to any member awareness events which he does not attend.

5. Future Provision

- 5.1. The Council is in the process of procuring an upgrade to the Audio-Visual system in the Council Chamber and installing the system in Committee Room 1 with the aim of improving the overall livestream viewer experience. The timescale for completion of the procurement and installation is not before the end of February 2022.
- 5.2. Councillors have expressed the desire for live captioning during live streams. Although major companies are working on this, to date no reliable solution has been developed.
- 5.3. Although there is no live caption option, the viewer may access the subtitles the next day. These are not one hundred percent accurate but as the minutes are the true record of the meeting and not the webcast, the subtitles do not have to meet the same standard of accuracy as the minutes. Links to the Agenda Papers will be added to the YouTube front screen of the recording to improve accessibility and address any issues with the captioning. YouTube subtitling is available at no cost.
- 5.4. To ensure equal access to information, in future any members' awareness seminar will also include a BSL signer as part of the recording.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. The current method of subtitling is both time-consuming and costly, placing a significant burden on the employees in addition to their existing duties.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The costs of professionally subtitling meetings are estimated at £80-£100k per annum excluding employee costs.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. There are no climate change, sustainability, or environmental implications in terms of this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. None.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. There was no requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment or consultation in relation to the proposals contained within this report.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

14 October 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ♦ Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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