

**To: Council**

**On: 3 March 2022**

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**Report by: Director of Finance and Resources**

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**Heading: Governance Arrangements**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to set out arrangements for Board and Council meetings up to and including the next scheduled meeting of the Council on 28 April 2022.
  - 1.2 The report confirms arrangements for meetings going forward taking into account the current position on public health measures and guidance in place to combat Covid-19, including the Omicron variant, and any other public health concerns that may prevent elected members attending meetings in person in the Council Chamber.
  - 1.3 The arrangements set out in the report continue those previously put in place to allow maximum flexibility to enable meetings to take place in the most appropriate and safe way, while taking into account any public health guidance or advice available at the time of the meetings.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Council is asked to:
  - a) approve the arrangements for Council and Board meetings set out in section 3 of this report, which will continue to include the options to use hybrid meetings involving elected members attending meetings in person in Renfrewshire House, should this be consistent with advice and guidance on public health, or to hold meetings remotely using the Teams platform.

- b) note that the arrangements for future meetings of Council and Boards will be brought to the next scheduled meeting of the Council on 28 April 2022.
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### **3. Background - Arrangements for the Next Cycle of meetings**

- 3.1 At its last meeting on 16 December 2021, the Council agreed to continue the previously approved arrangements for the conduct of Council and Board meetings including the availability of hybrid meetings for Council with conveners having discretion to continue holding meetings of their Board by Teams. It was also noted that all of the Council and board meetings would be broadcast live to allow the public to observe those meetings.
  - 3.2 One of the now established characteristics of the new Omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus is significantly increased transmissibility than previous variants. Although matters have significantly improved, transmission and infection levels across the country remain high and are expected to be so for some time yet. The updated Scottish Government guidance for offices, supports a managed and gradual return to office based working, with a hybrid model recommended and advising the continuation of appropriate infection control measures, including physical distancing particularly in areas of congregation such as meeting rooms. The ongoing return to Renfrewshire House is continuing for the time being to apply the existing physical distancing requirements, including in the Council Chamber, reflecting the current guidance and the duty on the Council to protect the health and well-being of its elected members and employees.
  - 3.3 The current arrangements in place that were approved at previous Council meetings allow for hybrid meetings to take place in the Council Chamber but the protocol adopted by the Council for hybrid meetings allows each convener to decide to hold the meeting remotely by Teams. For the current cycle of meetings all conveners exercised the option available to them to conduct the meeting remotely using Teams. It is proposed that the current arrangements continue and are reviewed again at the next scheduled Council meeting on 28 April 2022.
  - 3.4 Any decision to change the current physical distancing requirement in the Chamber that would increase the number of those who could attend meetings in person will only be taken after a full risk assessment has been completed taking into account the relevant Scottish Government Guidance in force at the time and the wider infection levels prevalent.
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### **Implications of the Report**

- 1. **Financial** – None.
- 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.

3. **Community/Council Planning** – None.
4. **Legal** – As detailed in the report.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** – The report refers to the successful introduction of a system from Public-i which enabled hybrid meetings to be undertaken with some members being present in the Chamber with others accessing remotely and also for those meetings to be broadcast live.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – The proposals in the report recognise that it's formal Council and Board meetings only take place in Renfrewshire House when it is safe to do so. The report also acknowledges that where meetings can take place in Renfrewshire House, the number of attendees will be limited by the social distancing restrictions that are in place at the relevant time.
9. **Risk** – None.
10. **Privacy Impact** – The report refers to the live broadcasting of Council and Board meetings.
11. **Cosla Policy Position** – None.
12. **Climate Risk** – None.

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### **List of Background Papers –**

- 1) Minute of the Council meeting on 16 December 2021.

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