Report on	Member Audio Device Management for Remote Working
Date of Meeting	Wednesday 13 Janaury 2021
Reporting Officer	Barry O'Hagan
Contact Officer	same

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	NO	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon		

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To advise members on the provision of audio device management for remote working

2.0	**Background**
2.1	Following discussions from Council its was requested to refer the matter to P&R for resource and financial consideration.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Members currently have the personal choice for a mobile computing device for the committees and management system for papers (CMIS). These devices range from Apple mac and windows laptops to Apple Ipads and Android devices and tablets.
3.2	Dungannon and Magherafelt chambers have been adopted with echo cancelling hardware , streaming and Cisco webex to stream meetings successfully during periods where social distancing is required.
	The chambers were never envisaged as a complete remote meetings forum with interactive camera tracking and live streaming and the current solution is currently an affordable adaptation of the current chamber and the technology to provide remote meeting and streaming to the wider public.
	The wider public stream is not widley used nor requested. Attendance at meeting by representations, individuals and groups has been successfully for the wider part.
	The success of remote and hybrid Council and Committee meetings is reliant on a number of critical factors
	- Broadband Connectivity for Participants - The Hosted service (Cisco Webex,Zoom ,Teams) - Participant knowledge , Skill and Devices used - Host physical Environment

Overtime the skills of many participants within committee and council have allowed then to become proficient in the use of video technology and fully participating in the proceedings.

To improve the experience and sound quality issues it is recommended that Council issue a compatible headset to each Council member or Officer requiring same to improve voice audio input into hybrid meetings. It should be pointed out to all participants that mobile phones is not a suitable device for a satisfactory hybrid meetings experience for prolonged committee use and that all participants should use their allowance to acquire Ipad or laptop. All participants are encourage to use a headset.

Furthermore there continues to be a number of members and Officers whose domestic broadband connectivity is unreliable and insufficient to provide a full satisfactory experience and participation from home. Whilst this issue is very much beyond the control of Council and members , I'd urge officers and members to assess their connectivity and where possible use Council or alternative facilities to access meetings to avoid unnecessary technical disruption to meeting proceedings.

The current skills and ability of officers and members to navigate through remote meeting has significantly improved with experience, use and familiarity. The head of ICT had provided some webex training in March and April to members and officers . The learning and Development manager has been piloting further Teams trainng for the wider staff and members to make the use of the features, improve home working and alow remote meetings which continue to be a part of Council operations. Details of wider training in Microsoft Teams will be issued in the weeks ahead.

The current host environment in the two chambers now operates with ICT support for each committee and Council meeting for hybrid activity. Whilst meeting are probably slower to complete ,with counts and registers taking more time , the quality of proceeding has improved significantly. It is hoped that headset devices and mobile device choice can play a part in continuing to improve and review our processes as they place demands of of elected members to adopt to new ways of governance

 A comprehensive revamp and replacement of the current chamber hardware and fittings to facilitate remote hybrid meeting , streaming and interaction would require a significant 6 figure investment that would only go some way to satisfying social distancing , hybrid meeting processes and member physical participation within the current rooms allocated. A wider consultation with members around all the issues and impact of covid on future Council meetings and governance should be considered if members are minded to do so.

Members are requested complete their requirement to democratic services as soon as possible.

4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications:**
	Financial: Headset typically cost £35-50 . it is proposed to provide any additional headset and existing members ICT allowances from revenue reserves as required. Training 1.5 hours remote session for 10 participants £350

	Human Resources: Training for Microsoft Teams to be provisioned by Learning & Development Manager (Org Development)
	Risk Management: The impact of covid is continuosly assessed at a senior management level and measures taken to reduce any adverse impact.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments :** Not applicable
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Not applicable
	Rural Needs Implications: Not applicable currently
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Members are requested to note the report and approve necessary revenue reserves as per above for • the provision of additional headset and mobile devices as required by members • The provision of training to members on remote meeting technology (for OD) .
6.0	**Documents Attached & References:none**