STREAMING AND RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS FEASIBILITY STUDY, COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIOVISUAL SYSTEM INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS, AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11

MEETING: **POLICY AND RESOURCES**

DATE: **2ND DECEMBER 2026**

REPORT BY: **TOWN CLERK**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present an updated feasibility study on the possible implementation of live streaming and recording of Council meetings, as well as the implementation of hybrid Council meetings, when legislation allows, and request consideration of the associated audiovisual system and information technology investment requirements and the associated financial and policy implications.

1.2 The report presents a draft Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings Policy and Protocol and an updated Public Filming and Recording Policy for consideration, and also provides updated proposals and quotes for the associated capital investment that would be required to upgrade the Council Chamber audiovisual system.

1.3 Finally the report provides an update on associated information technology matters relating to councillors and meetings, including the Government's timetable for introducing legislation allowing town and parish councils to hold hybrid meetings, the issue of.gov.uk email addresses to Councillors, and the work to achieve the Cyber Essentials Accreditation.

2.0 Background to the Report

2.1 An initial feasibility study regarding the issue of the audiovisual technology in the Council Chamber and associated issues, was presented to a Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 22nd October 2025.

2.2 This report was linked to the Government's plans at the time to implement legislation to allow town and parish councils to hold hybrid meetings, and also considered whether the Council wished to investigate the streaming or recording of its meetings, move to a system of paperless / light meetings, and issue .gov.uk email addresses to all Councillors.

2.3 It was resolved at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting on 22nd October 2025 that:

i) The Council reaffirms that it wishes to implement hybrid Council Meetings, subject to forthcoming legislative approval by the Government allowing town and parish councils to do so.

ii) The Council agrees, in principle, to make the required investments to the Council Chamber audiovisual system, to enable efficient and effective hybrid meetings to take place, using its own Capital Budget, in the absence of any relevant external funding.

iii) The Council delays implementation of the investments until after the legislation is passed and guidance has been issued.

iv) At that time, further quotes are sought, for example from the Council's current information technology support company, and other audiovisual technology providers.

v) A provisional sum of £9,000 is included for the required audiovisual information technology investment in the 2026/27 Capital Budget.

vi) The £20,000 Capital Budget currently set aside in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the replacement of the Council Chamber PA System be set aside to support the cost of the additional audio system investments.

vii) The development of a relevant protocol and procedure for the implementation of hybrid meetings is deferred until after legislative approval and the issue of guidance from the National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks.

viii) The decision regarding the streaming or recording of Council Meetings is deferred to allow officers time to bring a full report forward looking further into the required technology, protocols and safeguards, and consulting with staff and seeking to address their concerns.

ix) The Council does not revisit the investigation of the feasibility of implementing a system of paperless / light meetings at this time.

x) The Council seeks to issue gov.uk email addresses to all councillors, with effect from 1st April 2026 on the basis of a Microsoft Exchange Online Plan at a cost of £2.94 per month.

3.0 Current Situation

3.1 An update in relation to each of the above recommendations and issues is provided in this section of the report.

Hybrid Meetings Legislative Situation

3.2 The Government has previously indicated that it intends to amend legislation to allow town and parish councils to hold hybrid and remote meetings in the same way that principal councils can.

3.3 The Government undertook an extensive consultation in relation to this issue which drew significant support from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and thousands of individual parish and town councils, including this Council.

3.4 Following the consultation, the Government confirmed that it is committed to giving councils the choice to conduct hybrid and remote meetings

3.5 However, the timescales for the required amendments to current legislation are still to be confirmed, and the issue was *not* included in the recent English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, drawing criticism from NALC.

3.6 It was previously agreed that the Council delays implementation of any investments in the Council Chamber audiovisual system, and the development of a relevant protocol and procedure for the implementation of hybrid meetings, until after the legislation is passed and guidance has been issued by NALC.

3.7 However, in light of the wish to introduce streaming and recording of council meetings and the age, performance and reliability of the audio visual technology already in the chamber, it is felt that the Council needs to consider making the investment sooner rather than later.

Capital Budget Provision

3.8 A provisional sum of £9,000 has been included within the 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget for the required Council Chamber audiovisual information technology investment.

3.9 This is in addition to the £20,000 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget provision already set aside for the replacement of the Council Chamber PA System, which will be available to support the cost of the audiovisual system investments.

3.10 This provides a total budget of £29,000 in the 2026/27 Capital Budget.

Current Council Chamber Technology and its Limitations

3.11 The previous report to the October 2025 Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee provided a summary of the current audiovisual system in the Council Chamber and its limitations, provided information on the required technological improvements that would be needed to facilitate efficient and effective video conferencing, and an indication of the associated costs and possible funding options.

3.12 It is not intended to repeat any of this information but a copy of this report is attached at Appendix 1 for members' information.

Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings

Policy and Protocol

3.13 The previous report provided detailed information around the legislative background for streaming and recording of council meetings, policy and protocol considerations, and the concerns of officers.

3.14 It was agreed at the October 2025 Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee that *'the decision regarding the streaming or recording of Council Meetings is deferred to allow officers time to bring a full report forward looking further into the required technology, protocols and safeguards, and consulting with staff and seeking to address their concerns'.*

3.15 As requested, officers have spent significant time researching the feasibility of the Council implementing the streaming or recording of its Council Meetings, including reviewing the legislative background, looking at what other councils do, researching policies and protocols, considering the required technology, investigating appropriate safeguards, and consulting with officers to establish and address their concerns.

3.16 A draft Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings Policy and Protocol has been prepared, alongside an update of the existing Public Filming and Recording Policy, to ensure consistency between the two policies, and these have been attached at Appendix 2 for consideration.

3.17 Members are asked to consider the policies and provide feedback to officers.

3.18 Please note that these are draft policies, and further consideration would need to be given to the detailed processes and protocols, linked to whichever technological solution is purchased, retention periods and data storage implications, use of subtitles and meeting transcripts, and staffing implications e.g. the additional staffing required to operate and monitor live streams, deal with any problems with the stream, or poor behaviour, and upload recordings to the website / You Tube etc.

3.19 Additionally, once legislation has been passed allowing town and parish councils to hold hybrid meetings, the Council would also need to consider a relevant protocol and procedure specifically for this, and whether this would be an addition to the Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings Policy and Protocol, or a separate standalone policy.

3.20 This protocol would need to consider how to ensure that public access to meetings can be controlled, meeting etiquette and expected behaviors, managing disruption, order of speaking, voting, confidentiality, and the remote exclusion of press and public for exempt agenda items.

3.21 However, it would be advisable to await the implementation of the new legislation and guidance from the National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks before developing such a protocol, so that this can be based on best practice guidance for the sector.

Investment in Council Chamber Audiovisual System

3.22 Officers are aware that the investigation of required technology upgrades that would be required to implement live streaming and / or recording of meeting, is closely linked to the investment that would be required to implement hybrid meetings and the functionality required for running hybrid or remote meetings has therefore been considered in the liaison with suppliers and investigation of appropriate technological investments.

3.23 The previous report looked at the initial feasibility of upgrading the Council Chamber audiovisual technology to facilitate efficient and effective video conferencing, and an indication of the associated requirements and costs.

3.24 Officers have taken the opportunity to build on this and seek further detailed advice, formal proposals and quotes from three audiovisual technology providers, as follows:

1. A town and parish council information technology and meeting management specialist.
2. The Council's current Council Chamber audio system provider
3. The Council's current information technology support company.

3.25 This has involved actually bringing each company to the Council Offices to properly survey the current technological setup, and understand the Council's requirements in terms of modernising the audiovisual technology, facilitating streaming and recording of meetings, and being fully prepared and ready for the implementation of hybrid meetings when legislation allows.

3.26 A summary of the three proposals received is provided in the following section of the report.

Town and Parish Council Information Technology Specialist Recommended System

3.27 Following a number of meetings, discussions, and a site visit, this company provided a proposal and quote to implement a modern, efficient and effective video conferencing system in the Council Chamber.

3.28 The quote is attached at Appendix 3.

3.29 The proposed system is summarised below:

1. **Nureva HDX (4 Bar + 2 Pod) Videoconferencing System**
   - *Full-room professional audio for large meeting and learning spaces*
   - *Simple bar, pod and hub system*
   - *Rich, room-filling speaker sound*
   - *Exceptional microphone pick-up across the room*
   - *Supports remote conferencing and hybrid meetings*
   - *Voice amplification for presenters*
   - *Assistive listening support*
   - *Designed to work with AI meeting tools*
   - *Flexible configurations for different room sizes*
   - *In room voice lift of all participants*

2. **Huddly Crew 3 x L1 Multi View Camera System**

3. **Max Hub Pro MTR and Slave Console**
   Compact room computing kit designed to power professional meeting-room solutions, supporting video conferencing, room control and collaboration when paired with compatible displays, cameras, microphones and peripherals.

4. **2 x 85" TV (Projector Screen Replacement)**
   The TVs are intended to go either end of the room to facilitate smaller meetings at the back of the room, but the TV's could equally both be installed both at the front of the room to allow one screen to be used for presentations and screen sharing and one for online meetings. Alternatively, a dual screen layout on one TV is possible via a Microsoft Teams Rooms Pro Licence at an annual cost of £350..

5. **Apple iPad A16 Tablet**

6. **Cabling, Brackets and Wall Mounts**
   All components installed for a tidy, secure, and polished setup.

7. **Full Set-Up, Configuration and Training**
   Engineers would take care of everything from pre-configuration of the equipment, installation, calibration, testing, training and on-hand assistance for the first meeting.

3.30 It has been advised that this system will provide a live meeting room set-up that can be used flexibly across both room configurations, whether using the full chamber or a smaller, back-of-chamber set-up e.g. for informal meetings, staff meetings and training.

3.31 The system is designed to be simple to use and will not require any manual reconfiguration between these different layouts. Users can simply begin their meeting from whichever side of the room they choose and the system will intelligently determine where participants are seated and which cameras and microphones should be used.

3.32 Both sides of the room will be equipped with a touch controller to start meetings, paired with a large display screen.

3.33 The camera system uses three intelligent cameras to provide a combination of full-room views and closer face shots. This creates a more natural and engaging meeting experience, with the system selecting the most appropriate camera view in a way that feels similar to a directed broadcast. This is particularly beneficial for remote attendees, as it helps improve inclusion and makes it easier for those joining from home to follow the meeting.

3.34 The proposed audio and microphone system provides a wide range of advanced features that are normally found in systems at a significantly higher price point, including:

- Full-room microphone coverage using technology, which creates thousands of virtual microphone pick-up points across the room.
- Voice lift, which subtly enhances voices in the room so that all participants can be heard more clearly, regardless of where they are seated, without needing to raise their voice.
- Voice amplification, allowing up to four Bluetooth microphones to be connected for fuller amplification within the room. This can be used on its own or alongside voice lift, enabling dedicated presenters to be amplified while still gently lifting the voices of other attendees.
- Bluetooth-enabled assistive hearing using ‘Auracast’.
- Support for Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids via an app on the attendee’s mobile device.
- Compatibility with standard Bluetooth headphones or earbuds.
- A secure broadcast option, which can be password or QR-code protected.
- The ability to broadcast two channels simultaneously, which may be useful for translation or alternative language services.

3.35 Please note that this system will not support hearing aids that use T-Coil only. T-Coil technology is expected to be phased out over the next five to seven years, and most modern hearing devices now include Bluetooth functionality.

3.36 Overall, this proposal provides a highly flexible system that does not need to be calibrated around a fixed room layout. This means the room can remain fully flexible and multi-purpose where required.

3.37 With regard to the operating system and meeting access, the room will be set up using Teams Rooms Basic, which is a free Microsoft licence. This enables room booking and provides a simple, easy-to-use meeting experience for users of all technical abilities. It also lends itself well to room hire, as external users can join and run meetings with minimal complexity. A full Microsoft Teams Rooms licence can be added at a later stage if additional functionality is required.

3.38 Extended warranties are included under optional extras and can be removed if not required, but will offer additional peace of mind. The standard repair warranty for all devices, excluding the TV's, is 2 years. The TV's are covered by a 1-year warranty.

Current PA System Provider Recommended System

3.39 Following a number of meetings, discussions, and a site visit, the current PA system supplier provided a proposal and quote, firstly to replace the current PA system, and secondly to implement a modern, efficient and effective video conferencing system in the Council Chamber.

3.40 This quote is attached at Appendix 4.

3.41 The company advised that current PA system has been in place for nearly 20 years, and unfortunately has now come to the end of its serviceable life. Although the system is still working, the components and spare parts for the system are no longer available, and support for the products has ended from the manufacturer and therefore the Council needs to consider proactively replacing the equipment before it fails.

3.42 The proposed system is summarised below:

Televic Flex PA System

- 20 x Desktop Conference Units (Flex)
    - 16 x Configured for Dual Delegate use
    - 4 x Configured for Single Delegate use
- 16 x Dual Delegate Licences
- 20 x Delegate Conference Microphone (40cm)
- 1 x Secure Wireless Access Point and Power Supply
- 2 x Charging Stations

3.43 This PA system would provide increased functionality on the current system including significantly increased battery life, touchscreens, chairmanship control tools and aids, and functionality for visually impaired users, and the system can be further customised to incorporate voting and order of speaking capabilities, if required in the future.

3.44 There is an option to add storage cases, meeting management / voting licences for each user, and replacement / spare battery packs.

3.45 A lower cost ‘value engineered’ ‘Televic Go’ option has also been included for comparison. Whilst this has reduced functionality, it is built on the same technology meaning there is no compromise in terms of sound quality, speech intelligibility, wireless security or overall system reliability, and this option would still provide an efficient system to allow users to speak, listen and request to contribute to debate.

3.46 The supplier has recommended that a mix and match set-up can be purchased whereby the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Town Clerk and Minute Taker could have Flex System units and all other users Go System units, and a quote has been provided for this option.

3.47 A separate proposal has been included for a video conferencing system which would work alongside the PA system.

3.48 The recommended video conferencing system is a Yealink MVC-S90. This is a fully Microsoft Teams certified room set up, designed with large meeting spaces in mind in a single integrated solution. As standard, the system comes with two PTZ cameras, a touch panel control screen / room controller, a dedicated Microsoft Teams computer, matrix mixer, and wireless presentation facilities. This system is fully compatible with the recommended Televic audio conferencing system.

3.49 The PTZ cameras use AI technology to automatically track and focus on the main speaker to make sure that they are always in frame for the online participants. These are 4K (high definition) units with 12x optical zoom and 90’ field of view.

3.50 The system allows councillors and officers to attend meetings either in person or remotely via Microsoft Teams, whilst maintaining a consistent experience for all participants. The proposed system supports hybrid meetings, remote attendance, wireless content sharing, meeting recording and live transcription through Microsoft Teams. When used in conjunction with Microsoft Teams Town Hall, meetings can also be streamed to members of the public where required. Microsoft Teams is also capable of generating live captions and real-time speech-to-text transcripts throughout the meeting. These transcripts remain available alongside the meeting recording and can be used to assist with the production of council minutes and records.

3.51 The recommended PA system and video conferencing system would be coupled with a new laser projector, electric screen and wireless connection system.

3.52 In terms of hearing assistance, the proposal would retain the existing induction hearing loop system. Audio from both the conferencing microphones and video conferencing platform would be integrated into the existing loop, ensuring continued support for hearing aid users without the need to replace the current system.

3.53 An enhanced Televic camera-follow solution has also been quoted for which links directly to the conference microphones and automatically recalls camera positions when individual delegates speak. Whilst this provides the highest degree of integration, it comes at a significantly higher cost and, in the opinion of the supplier, would only be justified if formal webcasting and advanced chamber automation were key priorities for the Council.

3.54 Overall, the supplier’s recommended system would be a combination of the Televic Flex and Go conferencing systems, wireless projector and screen, and Yealink MVC-S90 video conferencing solution.

3.55 The supplier believes that this provides the best balance of functionality, future flexibility and value for money, delivering support for in-person, remote and hybrid meetings, Microsoft Teams integration, livestreaming, meeting recording, real-time transcription and optional voting functionality, whilst avoiding the significant additional cost associated with dedicated microphone-driven camera tracking systems.

3.56 Should the Council’s requirements evolve in the future, the proposed platform also provides a clear upgrade path for enhanced meeting management, voting and advanced camera integration. The supplier considers that this system offers the best balance between functionality, future flexibility and overall value for money.

Information Technology Support Company's Recommended System

3.57 Following a number of meetings, discussions, and a site visit, the Council's information technology support company provided a proposal and quote to implement a modern, efficient and effective video conferencing system in the Council Chamber.

3.58 The quote is attached at Appendix 5.

3.59 The proposed system is Windows-based Microsoft Teams Rooms solution as summarised below:

1. **Yealink MVC S98-C5U-004 Windows-based Teams Rooms System plus four Smart Vision 80 cameras**
2. **Yealink VCH51 Pro for 'bring your own device' (BYOD) connectivity**
3. **Three View Sonic 65-inch commercial displays (two fixed displays and one mobile display)**
4. **Two Hikvision 128-microphone ceiling arrays, four ceiling speakers (for the main chamber), four column speakers (for the public area) and one dual-UHF handheld microphone**
5. **Equipment Rack, Brackets, Wall Mounts, Network and Cabling**
6. **Full Set-Up and Configuration and Handover**

3.60 Not included in the quote is the replacement of the hearing loop equipment, end user devices, or the removal and disposal of the existing equipment.

3.61 The Council's information technology support company would act as the Council's single point of contact throughout, managing the project end to end and working with their specialist AV installation partner, and being on site for the survey, installation, commissioning, testing and handover.

3.62 The key outcomes that would be delivered by this system are advised as by the provider as being:

- The ability to hold scheduled Microsoft Teams meetings from an in-room control.
- Multi camera coverage providing clear video coverage of the chair, officers and all councillors.
- Provide intelligible in-room and remote audio without a portable microphone at every seat.
- Support recording, transcription and potential streaming, subject to licensing and Council policy.
- Protect audience identity through a defined no-capture seating zone and operating procedure.
- Support wireless presentation and laptop-led 'bring your own device' (BYOD) meetings.
- Validate hearing-loop integration and accessible in-room amplification

Available Funding

3.63 There is no funding currently available from the Government for town and parish councils to facilitate technological improvements specifically relating to the implementation of streaming, recording or hybrid meetings.

3.64 Therefore, if the Council wished to go ahead and make the required improvements and investments, it would need to use the budget currently set aside in the 2026/27 Capital Programme.

3.65 An additional capital budget approval would be required if costs exceeded The £29,000 set aside in the 2026/27 Capital Budget.

Paperless Meetings

3.66 It was agreed at the last meeting that *'the Council does not revisit the investigation of the feasibility of implementing a system of paperless / light meetings at this time'.*

3.67 Officers are aware that there are some meeting management software systems available and in use by principal councils and some town councils that would allow the Council to operate fully electronic meetings, and that these systems bring some advantages and efficiencies in the administration of meetings by officers and in the use of paper and photocopying.

3.68 There would however be a number of considerations and costs linked to implementing such a system, including the purchase of a meetings software system, suitable hardware such as tablet computers for members, and a full feasibility study would be required if the Council wished to investigate this further in the future.

3.69 It is the view of officers that the Council's initial focus should be on making the necessary improvements to the Council Chamber audiovisual system and establishing a robust protocol and arrangements for streaming and recording of meetings, and preparedness for hybrid meetings before reconsidering this issue.

Gov.Uk Email Addresses for Councillors

3.70 The previous report provided the full background to the issue of .gov.uk email addresses to councillors highlighting the reasons for this, including a recommendation from the Council's external auditors.

3.71 The Council's information technology provider was consulted on the basis of issuing every councillor with a .gov.uk email address via a Microsoft Exchange Online Plan at a cost of £3.08 per month (recently increased). This costs £1,109 per year for 30 councillors, and allows internet only access to a Microsoft Outlook Account. This has been budgeted for in the Information Technology Revenue Budget.

3.72 Linked to the Council seeking to make improvements to its cyber security arrangements and achieve the Cyber Essentials Accreditation, and the specific need to have protections in place around the use of personal devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones, and additional security checks such as Multi Factor Authentication, the Council's information technology provider advised that further 'Intune' and 'Microsoft Entra ID' licences would be required for each councillor email licence to ensure the necessary security protections are in place to meet Cyber Essentials requirements.

3.73 The additional cost of the licences is £7.95 per month per councillor (£2,862 per annum) and has not currently been provided for in the Information Technology Revenue Budget and will therefore need to be provided for in the ongoing budget setting process for 2027/28.

3.74 Gov.uk email addresses have now been rolled out to all councillors and are now in use for official Council business and communications between officers and councillors.

Cyber Essentials Accreditation

3.75 It was agreed by the Council at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting on 21st January 2026 that the Information Technology Infrastructure Capital Budget would be used to put in place various improvements to the Council's cybersecurity arrangements, following the completion of a Cybersecurity Audit, and to proceed with the necessary technical preparations to enable the Council to apply for and achieve the nationally-recognised and government backed Cyber Essentials Accreditation

3.80 This work is now nearing completion and accreditation is expected to be confirmed soon.

4.0 Matters for Consideration

4.1 Members are requested to consider the report and provide instruction to officers on the preferred next steps by making decisions on the following issues:

1. Consider the draft Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings Policy and Protocol and updated Public Filming and Recording Policy attached at Appendix 2 and provide feedback to officers.

   Please note that these are draft policies, and further consideration would need to be given to the detailed processes and protocols, linked to whichever technological solution is purchased, retention periods and data storage implications, use of subtitles and meeting transcripts, and staffing implications e.g. the additional staffing required to operate and monitor live streams, deal with any problems with the stream or poor behaviour, upload recordings etc, as well as incorporating the protocols for hybrid meetings when these are permitted.

2. Determine whether it wishes to make the required investments to the Council Chamber audiovisual system, using the Capital Budget in place, and additional Capital Budget approvals, as required, and to what timeframe e.g. before or after the amended legislation allowing town and parish councils to hold hybrid meetings is implemented.

3. Depending upon whether the Council wishes to go ahead and make the recommended investments, and which proposal and quote is agreed, approve an additional capital budget approval of between £6,150 and £7,742.

5.0 Policy Implications

5.1 This report conforms to Strategic Aim 1 and 2 in the Council's Service Delivery Plan:

"To provide good quality governance and management of the Council"

"To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner".

6.0 Staffing Implications

6.1 Council officer time would be required to undertake any further investigation of the feasibility of implementing the changes referenced in this report, such as project managing the information technology enhancements and the implementation of new protocols and practical implementation arrangements.

6.2 Further consideration would need to be given to the detailed processes and protocols linked to whichever technological solution is purchased, retention periods, use of subtitles and meeting transcripts, and the staffing implications e.g. the additional staff resourcing required to operate and monitor live streams, deal with any problems with the stream or poor behaviour, upload recordings etc, balanced against any efficiencies e.g. from less time preparing minutes

6.3 It should also be noted, as highlighted in the previous report, that some officers have serious reservations about meetings being recorded and efforts would need to be made to manage their concerns and implement live streaming and recording of meetings in a way that addresses all concerns.

7.0 Financial Implications

Council Chamber Audiovisual System

Quote from Town and Parish Council Information Technology Specialist

7.1 Based on the initial investigations and advice provided by the town and parish council information technology specialist and the quote attached at Appendix 3, the cost of implementing the required improvements and enhancements to the audiovisual infrastructure in the Council Chamber, excluding extended warranties, would be as follows

Nureva HDX (4 Bar + 2 Pod) Videoconferencing System	£21,199
Huddly Crew 3 x L1 Multi View Camera System	£7,960
Max Hub Pro MTR and Slave Console	£2,384
2 x 85" TVs	£1,700
Apple iPad A16 Tablet	£325
Cabling, Brackets and Wall Mounts	£278
Full Set-Up, Configuration and Training	£1,300
Total	**£35,146**

**Excluding extended warranties*

7.2 If the Council agreed to go ahead with this quote an additional capital budget approval of £6,150 would be required.

Quote from Current PA System Provider

7.3 Based on the initial investigations and advice provided by the current Council PA system supplier, and the quote attached at Appendix 4, the cost of implementing the recommended improvements and enhancements to the audiovisual infrastructure in the Council Chamber would be as follows:

Digital Audio Conferencing (PA) System (Televic Flex and Go Combined option)	£33,973
Video Conferencing System (Yealink MVC S90 System plus Rack)	£12,310
Projector and Screen	£5,337
Total	**£51,620**

Plus annual service contract at £630 per annum.

**Excluding optional extras such as storage case, voting functionality licences, and replacement battery packs*

7.4 This quote has been discounted as it is nearly double the budget currently set aside.

Quote from Information Technology Support Company

7.5 Based on the initial investigations and advice provided by the Council's information technology support company, the recommended improvements and enhancements to the audiovisual infrastructure in the Council Chamber would be as follows:

Yealink Videoconferencing System and four cameras	£11,424
3 x ViewSonic Commercial Displays	£3,831
Ceiling and Floor Microphone Arrays	£10,701
Specialist AV Installation	£4,786
Professional Services and Project Management	£3,600
Contingency	£2,400
Total	**£36,742**

7.6 If the Council agreed to go ahead with this quote an additional capital budget approval of £7,742 would be required.

Funding and Budget Implications

7.7 A provisional sum of £9,000 has been included within the 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget for the required Council Chamber audiovisual information technology investment.

7.8 This is in addition to the £20,000 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget provision already set aside for the replacement of the Council Chamber PA System, which will be available to support the cost of the audiovisual system investments.

7.9 This provides a total budget of £29,000 in the 2026/27 Capital Budget.

7.10 There is no funding currently available from the Government for town and parish councils to facilitate technological improvements specifically relating to the implementation of hybrid meetings and no capital budget is currently set aside for this project.

7.11 As highlighted earlier, if the Council wished to go ahead and make the required improvements and investments, it would need to set aside additional budget in the Capital Programme via an additional capital budget approval.

7.12 This would be £6,150 if the system recommended by the town and parish council information technology specialist is agreed and £7,742 if the system recommended by the Council's information technology support company is agreed.

7.13 The officer's preferred option would be to work with the town and parish council specialist due to this company specialising in the town and parish council sector, as well as being the lowest quote. Working with this company would also open up future opportunities to work with them in introducing compatible meeting management software, if the Council wished to revisit the issue of fully electronic 'paperless' meetings.

7.14 There may be an additional cost to the significant data storage requirements that creating, storing and posting video files may create and further advice would be needed from the Council's information technology advisors once the Council has considered retention periods.

Councillor Email Costs

7.15 Regarding the .gov.uk email addresses for councillors, there are additional revenue costs associated with issuing .gov.uk email addresses to councillors.

7.16 Issuing every councillor with an email address via Microsoft Exchange Online Plan currently costs £3.08 per councillor per month equating to £1,109 per year for 30 councillors, and allow internet only access to a Microsoft Outlook Account. This has been budgeted for in the Information Technology Revenue Budget.

7.17 As highlighted earlier there is an unbudgeted additional revenue budget implication linked to the Cyber Essentials Accreditation requirements, necessitating additional protections around the use of councillor's personal devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones, and the Council's information technology provider has advised that a further licence is required for each councillor email licence to ensure the necessary security protections are in place. The additional cost of the licences is £7.95 per month per councillor (£2,862 per annum), currently is discounted to £4.83 per month per councillor (£1,738.80 per annum). This has not currently been provided for in the Information Technology Revenue Budget and will therefore need to be provided for in the ongoing budget setting process for 2027/28.

Cyber Essentials Accreditation Costs

7.18 The work to improve the Council's cybersecurity arrangements and seek the Cyber Essentials Accreditation is as previously reported and is being funded via the Information Technology Infrastructure Capital Budget. The total cost of this work, as previously agreed by the Council is £6,785 and has been funded from a combination of the Information Technology Revenue and Capital Budgets.

8.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

9.1 Implementing a system of streaming and recording of Council Meetings would make participating in local democracy more accessible to members of the public.

9.2 Implementing a system of hybrid Council Meetings (when legislation allows) would bring clear advantages in making the role of local councillor more accessible to prospective candidates with disabilities, caring commitments etc and would assist in retaining existing councillors.

10.0 Environmental, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

10.1 There are climate change considerations in the increased use of technology and data which would arise from the implementation of streaming and recording of Council meetings and the purchase of the required technology to facilitate this.

10.2 The Council's information technology support company and PA system provider are both local companies based in Tyneside. The town and parish council specialist is based in Buckinghamshire

10.3 Consideration of the implementation of paper light council meetings in the future would result in reduced use of paper and reduced photocopying, resulting in a reduced carbon footprint.

11.0 Risk Assessment

11.1 It is not considered that the matters contained in this report pose a risk to the health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

12.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

12.1 There is no personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR.

13.0 Recommendations

13.1 It is recommended that Members consider the information contained within this report and confirm to officers the preferred next steps by making decisions on the following issues:

1. Consider the draft Streaming and Recording of Council Meetings Policy and Protocol and updated Public Filming and Recording Policy attached at Appendix 2 and provide feedback to officers.

2. Determine whether the Council should make the required investments to the Council Chamber audiovisual system, using the Capital Budget in place, and additional Capital Budget approvals, as required, and to what timeframe e.g. before or after the amended legislation allowing town and parish councils to hold hybrid meetings is implemented.

3. Depending upon whether the Council wishes to go ahead and make the recommended investments, and which proposal and quote is agreed, approve additional capital budget approval of between £6,150 and £7,742