

Motion relating to the reintroduction of live streaming of committee meetings

In the names of Councillors Carol Birchmore, Cllr Donald Berry, Cllr Andrea Booth, Cllr Des Duncalfe, Cllr Glyn Marsden, Cllr Ken Simpson, Cllr Mike Smith and Cllr Mary Walsh

Voter turnout in the last election varied significantly by ward from 50% in North Manor down to 27% in Radcliffe East. There were 4 wards with under 30% turnout.

Does it matter if there is a low turnout?

As you are aware local governments in England play an important role, especially Unitary Authorities. They deliver local services from finance to education, transport, road maintenance, social housing, waste management, and much more. However, some people know that their local Council collects the bins and maintain roads but they think that councils do little else for them.

What impacts on a low turnout?

Voter apathy i.e. a lack of interest in the political processes, including elections and political efficacy relating to an individual's belief regarding their ability to impact on an election's result can impact on turnout.

It feels like many residents have lost trust in politicians and the political system both at a local and national level. Recent opinion polls report widespread low satisfaction levels with regards to the way the country and local councils are being run. It is our job as councillors to look at ways we can improve trust.

Lack of trust in the system

Claims made by people, particularly on social media, of the Council acting on behalf of developers rather than residents and other disinformation can further damage residents' perceived perception of the democratic system. Such claims are particularly prevalent in relation to planning decisions, awarding of contracts and purchasing decisions. It is therefore important that residents can view democracy in action and openly observe the way decisions are made.

Residents can attend council and committee meetings however, many are not aware that is the case. On some occasions, the number of people admitted to the public gallery has been limited, which has further eroded confidence in a democratic and open system.

For some residents caring responsibilities, disabilities or poor health means that they are unable to attend meetings in person.

Up until the end of 2023 Bury Council streamed the following meetings:

- Full Council
- Cabinet
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Planning
- Children and Young People Scrutiny

- Health Scrutiny

However, since 2024 only Full Council and Cabinet meetings can be viewed online. For some residents this feels like there is a lack of transparency, and can further perpetuate disinformation rumours.

The reason given for reducing the number of meetings was down to cost relating to the suitability of the council chamber.

It is important to consider whether this is standard practise in councils, particularly in relation to Greater Manchester. An internet search provides the following information about each of the GM councils:

Stockport, Manchester, Trafford and Bolton stream all meetings and Oldham streams Full Council, Cabinet and planning.

Many councils use a YouTube channel for streaming and have a less structured approach to delivery. This does not really impact on the viewing experience since the most important thing is that viewers can hear what has been said and the discussions that take place.

The Council resolves to:

- Re-look at costs of re-introducing live streaming some of the meetings including planning, overview and scrutiny and audit
- Investigate ways of reducing the cost of streaming meetings including having discussions with other councils about more cost effective streaming methods