

Council's culture committee postponed due to technical problems

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

Technical problems with The City of Edinburgh Council's website has forced a committee to be adjourned until December, as councillors raised concerns about reports being "pulled and re-written".

The Culture and Communities committee was due to meet on Tuesday but as the agenda was not available to the public in advance members agreed it could not go ahead.

Officers explained that after the papers went live last week, the system used to upload committee documents experienced an outage causing them to disappear from the website.

A briefing note circulated yesterday said this was "obviously not acceptable in terms of democratic transparency and in terms of accessibility" and urged members to agree on postponing the meeting.

The note said: "As the meeting has already been called, it will be necessary to convene the meeting and adjourn.

"We are working with our suppliers to get the issue fixed as

soon as possible. We are also identifying what we can do in the interim to allow meetings to proceed as planned and enable transparency and accessibility to meeting papers.”

Convener Cllr Val Walker also revealed that a report due to be discussed on filming and events in parks and green spaces in the city was removed from the agenda to be re-written by officers, but did not explain why.

“I don’t expect that to come to this committee before December,” Cllr Walker told the committee.

SNP councillor Amy McNeese-Mechan said there “seems to be two different issues” and asked for clarity on the situation.

She said: “One is the technological issues of why things weren’t publicly published which is the usual procedure.

“But the other is how many reports aren’t available to elected members and the reason why – we’ve never really had just one person meeting with officers to find that out.

“I think there’s a lot of us that are wondering, and would genuinely like to know, why are so many being pulled and re-written? Our officers are pretty confident and experienced so for me that raises real questions.

“Why are so many things we thought were going to be available not available? It gives me concern.”

Cllr Walker reassured members that “only one report is being re-written” and said she would find out the status of the reports and liaise with officials on whether a postponed meeting is needed this month or if all business on the agenda can hold off until the next committee in December.

Cllr Hal Osler said: “It’s really really important we do get [the reports] because we are waiting on this information and they’re quite substantial and there’s a number of individuals waiting on this information as well.”

In addition, reports for the Transport and Environment Committee on Thursday (October 6) are not available on the council website, although a link to the papers was posted on Twitter by convener Scott Arthur and it is anticipated this will still go ahead.

These papers are to be found [here](#) online. (under the heading Resources)

It comes following a series of technology issues which have faced the local authority.

The council's main customer service account, @edinhelp, has been suspended since 14 September over an alleged 'ban evasion', whilst Freedom of Information requests previously published by Edinburgh Council have remained inaccessible for much of the last week.

Cllr Mandy Watt, the council's Finance and Resources convener, said: "We are currently experiencing technical issues with the uploading of some documents to our website as well as a separate issue with our Twitter Account. Suppliers providing these services have been contacted and we will continue work with them to resolve these problems as quickly as possible."

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