

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

4 MAY 2021

DEFERRING CONSIDERATION OF THE POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL AND THE APPOINTMENTS FOR 2021/22

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To note the current position in respect of the political composition of the Council, the latest position in respect of holding remote meetings and to effectively defer the annual meeting business until the next scheduled Council Meeting to be held on 13 July 2021.

2.0 Background Information

Political Composition of the Council and Annual Appointments

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, there are currently two vacancies on the Council (Bridge Ward and Boughton Ward) following the resignations of Cllrs Brendan Clarke-Smith and Gill Dawn.
- 2.2 The by-election to fill the Boughton Ward vacancy is to be held on Thursday 6 May 2021. Given the vacancy for the Bridge Ward has only just arisen, it was not possible to hold this on the same date due to the strict election timetables. It is anticipated that this Bridge Ward by-election will therefore be held early in the summer.
- 2.3 Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to consider the political composition of the Council. The Act, together with Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, require local authorities to allocate seats on Committees of a local authority on a proportional basis, in accordance with the number of seats on the Council held by each political group.
- 2.4 Given the two vacancies on the Council, it is proposed that the recalculation and allocation of seats to political groups be deferred until the next scheduled Council Meeting on 13 July 2021, by which point the two vacancies will both have been filled.
- 2.5 It is therefore proposed that, aside from the appointment of a new Chairman for 2021/22, that all the other appointments of the Leader, Deputy Leader, and Opposition Spokespersons, memberships on Committees and representation on outside bodies all be deferred until the next scheduled meeting of the Council.
- 2.6 In practice, the impact of deferring the appointments will mean the Council will have to run with vacancies on the Committees (namely Policy & Finance, Leisure & Environment, and Shareholder) where Councillors Clarke-Smith and Dawn held seats, but this will be for the next committee cycle only.

Remote Meetings

- 2.6 As Members will be aware, this Annual Meeting of the Council was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 18 May 2021. However, given the uncertainty around the remote meeting

legislation, and following consultation with the Chairman of the Council and the Group Leaders, it was agreed to bring forward to this date.

- 2.7 The ability to hold the Annual Meeting on a remote basis was uncertain, as the current regulations (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England & Wales) Regulations 2020) enabling remote meetings was due to expire on 7 May 2021.
- 2.8 The Government had indicated that these Regulations would not be extended, and had indeed advised local authorities to hold their annual meetings ahead of the 7 May date if possible. There is a current court action aimed at establishing if remote meetings are actually permissible under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, however it was uncertain if any ruling would be made ahead of the 7 May date.
- 2.9 It was felt that given the uncertainty of being able to hold the Annual Meeting on 18 May in a remote way, the other option was to hold this in person at Castle House, but this would disenfranchise some Members who would be reluctant or unable to attend. Therefore, the option of bringing forward to this date, and effectively deferring the annual appointments, given the two vacancies on the Council, was considered to be the most preferable way forward.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION that the Council:

- (a) note the current position in respect of remote meetings; and**
- (b) defer the political composition of the Council and annual appointments until the next meeting, scheduled to be held on Tuesday 13 July 2021 and carry forward the existing appointments until that date.**

Background Papers

Nil.

For further information please contact Nigel Hill on 01636 655243.

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