

URGENCY ITEMS - MINUTE OF DECISION

Delegation arrangements for dealing with matters of urgency

Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution provides that Chief Officers may take urgent decisions if they are of the opinion that circumstances exist which make it necessary for action to be taken by the Council prior to the time when such action could be approved through normal Council Procedures. They shall, where practicable, first consult with the Leader and Chairman (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman) and the Opposition Spokesperson of the appropriate committee.

Given the current emergency in respect of the Covid 19 pandemic and the decision taken to suspend committee meetings while social distancing measures continue, the urgency decision provision under Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution has been widened to extend the consultation to include the Leaders of all the political groups on the Council.

Subject: **Review of June Committee Cycle Suspension**

Appropriate Committee: **Full Council**

Details of Item (including reason(s) for use of urgency procedure):

Reinstatement of Committee Meetings

This note sets out the decision for reinstating committee meetings following the summer recess. Meetings will need to be held in the virtual format using Microsoft Teams with no attendance by Members of the Council (other than the Chairman if they wish to have officer support) or the public at Castle House. This is in accordance with the Government's social distancing measures but this will again be subject to ongoing review in line with any fresh guidance issued by the Government.

The meetings to be reinstated are set out below:

Committee	Date	Start Time
Licensing & General Purposes	3 September	6pm
Planning	8 September	2pm
Economic Development	9 September	6pm
Homes & Communities	14 September	6pm
Shareholder	15 September	5.30pm
Leisure & Environment	22 September	6pm
Policy & Finance	24 September	6pm
Audit & Accounts	30 September	10am
Planning	6 October	2pm

The table above gives the start times for the reinstated committees. The Councillors' Commission at their virtual meeting held on 8 July 2020 supported the reinstatement of the committees but raised the issue of start times for meetings given those meetings held in a

virtual manner to date all started at 2pm. Therefore, a canvass of all Members was undertaken and a small majority favoured the 6pm start. The reinstated committees are therefore, being held at their regular start times as indicated above with the exception of Planning Committee as the majority of Planning Committee Members expressed the view that they wished to retain a 2pm start time.

The public part of the meetings will all be broadcast live on the Council's social media platforms to enable public access and parish representatives will be able to 'join' the Planning Committee to address the Members in accordance with the usual practice. Conducting meetings in this manner has been made possible by virtue of the Local Authorities and Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police & Crime Panel Meetings) England & Wales Regulations 2020.

The holding of Full Council Meetings will be kept under review.

Members Attendance at Meetings

This note also sets out the position in respect of Members attendance at meetings. Given the June cycle of meetings was cancelled, a large number of Members will not have attended a formal Council meeting since the last Full Council held on 9 March 2020. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that "if a Member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a Member of the authority."

It is therefore necessary to use the urgency provision to authorise a blanket extended period of absence for all Members in order to capture all Members to whom this applies.

Decisions

To reinstate the September cycle of Committee meetings as set out above.

The Chief Executive keep the provision of Committee Meetings and Full Council Meetings under review in line with Government guidance in respect of social distancing.

A blanket authorisation be given to all Members to approve any continued absence due to the Covid-19 pandemic, if they had failed to attend a Council meeting for six months in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Reason for Decision

To re-start Council business and authorise the non-attendance of those Members who may not have been able to attend a formal Council Meeting for a six-month period.

Members Consulted:

Councillor D.J. Lloyd – Leader of the Council – 24.08.20

Councillor P. Peacock – Leader of the Labour Group – 21.08.20

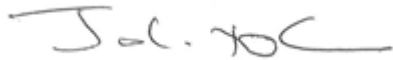
Councillor Mrs G.E. Dawn – Leader of the Independent Group – no response by deadline but Mrs Dawn supported in the Councillors' Commission)

Councillor P.R.B. Harris – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group – 22.08.20

Councillor R. Crowe – Chairman of the Council – 22.08.20

(Note – this decision was supported by the Councillors' Commission at their meeting held on 8 July 2020).

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.C. Croc', written in a cursive style.

Date: 26.08.20