

Report of the Chief Executive

COMMITTEES AND GOVERNANCE DURING THE CURRENT PERIOD1. Purpose of report

To inform the Council of the changes to legislation that allow for remote meetings, and the impact of the legislation on the Council's ability to make decisions.

2. Background

As a consequence of government guidelines regarding social distancing, a number of regulation changes have been made to procedure rules under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020. In brief, the changes relate to councils having the capability to hold meetings remotely. The rules are in place until 7 May 2021.

3. Governance Issues

In order to maintain the Council's decision-making processes, the use of the Chief Executive's Urgency Powers have been utilised in accordance with the Constitution. The Policy and Performance Committee has the capability to consider items that could not be submitted to other Committees, and whilst the Policy and Performance Committee may be used as an over-arching decision-making committee in the short-term, it is proposed that the full Committee programme is rolled-out as soon as is practicable.

The Interim Monitoring Officer has stated that temporary standing orders will be provided to accommodate the meetings, however, this will be undertaken as and when necessary.

It is planned to issue devices to councillors to suit their needs at an estimated cost of approximately £49,000. The devices will have the ability to be used in conjunction with the committee management system the Council uses and will enable members to read, store and annotate committee papers at will.

4. Meetings procedure

Attached in the appendix is a meetings procedure adapted and amended from the Association of Democratic Services Model Procedure. As a procedure, it is not necessary to amend the Constitution, however, it will provide guidance to chairs, committee members and officers during this period of change.

Recommendation

The Council is asked to NOTE the report.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

Meeting Procedures

1. The meeting facilitator's role will be to control the video, telephone or conferencing technology employed for remote access and attendance and to administer the public and member interaction, engagement and connections on the instruction of the Chair.
2. The Council will endeavour to implement a solution that will enable members participating in meetings remotely to indicate their wish to speak via this solution, replacing the physical practices or rules concerning raising one's hand or standing to be recognised or expressing a desire to speak.
3. It will assist the meeting if those members who wish to speak on a particular item could indicate their wish to speak to the Chair and to the relevant officer in advance of the start of the meeting where possible. Political groups are also encouraged to co-ordinate this activity wherever possible in respect of full Council meetings and other meetings likely to result in a high number of those who wish to speak.
4. The Chair will follow the rules set out in the Council's Constitution when determining who may speak, as well as the order and priority of speakers and the content and length of speeches in the normal way.
5. The Chair, at the beginning of the meeting, will explain the protocol for member and public participation and the rules of debate. The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.
6. Members are asked to adhere to the following etiquette during remote attendance at a meeting:
 - Committee members are asked to join the meeting no later than twenty minutes before the start to allow themselves and the meetings facilitator the opportunity to test the equipment.
 - Any camera should show a non-descript background or, where possible, a virtual background and members should take care to not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video-feed.
 - Type their name on joining the meeting in full, whether they are substituting for another councillor, whether they have received the apologies of another councillor or, whether they wish to declare an interest on an item on the agenda and the nature of that interest.
 - All members to have their video turned off and microphones muted when not talking.
 - Rather than raising one's hand or rising to be recognised or to speak, members should avail themselves of the remote process for requesting to be heard.
 - Members are to use the chat facility to indicate to the chair that they wish to speak. Members will unmute their microphone and turn their

cameras on when the Chair invites them to speak. The chat facility must not be used for private conversations between councillors.

- Only speak when invited to by the Chair.
 - Only one person may speak at any one time.
 - When referring to a specific report, page, or slide, mention the report, page, or slide so that all members have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.
7. Where members of the public are exercising speaking rights at the meeting via remote attendance, the Chair will as part of their introduction explain the procedure for their participation which will reflect those relevant elements of the above. Members of the public must adhere to this procedure otherwise they may be excluded from the meeting.
8. When the Chair is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate and (if the rules of the meeting require) there is a proposer and seconder for the item being discussed the Chair will progress to making a decision. Unless a recorded vote is called, the method of voting will be at the Chair's discretion and will be by one of the following methods:
- a vote by electronic means; or
 - an officer calling out the name of each member present with members stating 'for', 'against', or 'abstain' to indicate their vote when their name is called with the relevant officer clearly stating the result of the vote and the Chair then moving onto the next agenda item; or
 - by the general assent of the meeting.
9. Details of how Members voted will not be kept or minuted unless a recorded vote is called. Where a recorded vote is requested the relevant officer will ask members in turn to signify verbally whether or not they support that request.