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COUNCIL
12 MAY 2020

Report of the Director of Corporate Services

REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURE RULES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To establish meeting procedure rules for virtual meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Remote Meetings Procedure Rules as attached are adopted with immediate effect.
2. That the Director of Corporate Services is delegated authority to make minor modifications to the Procedural Rules in line with the Regulations, with any significant changes being referred to Council if required, to reflect best practice and experience.

WARDS AFFECTED

Not applicable

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Legislation has recently been passed as the means and guidance for the conduct of remote meetings of the Council and its various Committees and Sub-Committees. The Protocol and Procedure Rules should be read in conjunction with the Rules of Procedure contained within the Constitution and apply notwithstanding any other legislation or current or pre-existing rules of the Council governing meetings. The Regulations remain valid until 7 May 2021. This means that wherever there is a conflict, the Remote Meetings Procedure Rules take precedence in relation to any remote meetings.
- 1.2 The effect of the Regulations on the District Council's Constitution is to insert what are, in effect, mandatory standing orders to enable meetings to be held remotely, either wholly or partially.
- 1.3 The Regulations maintain the ability of the public and press to attend virtual meetings and hear and preferably see proceedings in action. The notification periods for publication of agenda and reports remains as is, with all papers now being deposited on the District council's website as opposed to the need to attend in person to inspect.

2. REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURE RULES

- 2.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is a draft Protocol and Procedure Rules for adoption by the District Council to apply to all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees.

- 2.3 Procedure Rule 18.4 is not prescribed by the new Regulations, but is considered prudent in order to help limit the timing of meetings and make them more focussed on the matter in hand. It is not considered that a shortening of the time limit for speeches will impede a Councillor in making her/his point, or in making a reasonable decision.
- 2.4 It is likely that as time goes by, and the currently lock down is relaxed, the procedure rules may need to be modified to reflect experience and best practice. It is recommended that this be done by delegated authority to the Director of Corporate Services, where such modifications are minor and in accordance with the Regulations. All major refinements will be presented to the Council for approval.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Legal

The Procedure Rules are based on the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392. The legal risk is therefore low.

Use of Zoom as a means of convening and recording meetings has been risk assessed in terms of GDPR and privacy issues generally. The risk on that from this is also assessed as low. Zoom will continue as the medium for public meetings given its functionality until such time as the District Council can move to a common platform.

3.2 Financial

There are no financial risks arising from this report.

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

5. CONTACT INFORMATION

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6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules