

SHORT REPORT	
Subject Matter	Decision Making and Governance
Lead Director	Surjit Tour, Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Date	22 April 2020



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Regulations

- 1.1 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Remote Committee Regulations") came into force on 4th April 2020.

The Regulations;

- Enable the Council to determine the day and time of meetings, and alter the frequency, move or cancel meetings without requirement for further notice.
- Remove the need to hold an Annual Meeting (until 7th May 2021) and allow the Local Authority to hold such meetings as it requires.
- Extend any appointments that were due to be made at the Annual Meeting until the next Annual Meeting (eg Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairs, Vice-Chairs, appointments to Outside Bodies etc).
- Allow Local Authority meetings to be held virtually via webcasting, or telephone conferencing.
- Allow the Council to publish documents on the website where there is a requirement to publish information, or make documents available to the public for inspection at its offices.

- 1.2 A report on the consequential changes to the Council's constitution is included on the agenda for Emergency Committee.

The regulations set out clearly that a member is considered to be 'in remote attendance' where they are able to:

- Hear and be heard, and where possible see and be seen, by other members in attendance;
- Hear and be heard, and where possible see and be seen, by any members of the public who are entitled to attend to exercise their right to speak; and
- Be heard, and where possible seen, by members of the public.

2. KEY ISSUES

2.1 Business solution to enable remote participation

The Council has been testing the most effective platform to use to enable effective remote committee meeting to take place, and enable the requisite remote participation. Both Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams are being explored as potential solutions. Working alongside existing webcasting provisions, the solution will need to satisfy the requirements for Member attendance and participation alongside public attendance. Licensing Committee members are helping to pilot options so that technical and other issues can be quickly identified and resolved. The pilot is ongoing. The agreed solution will form the basis of all remote Council committee and Cabinet meetings. The plan is to bring on stream Committees meetings in a phased approach so that Members are supported appropriately and Officers in a position to manage the work necessary to support the Committees.

2.2 Rescheduling Committee meetings

Decisions are currently being routed through:

- the Emergency Committee for Council functions,
- the Leader for Executive functions
- The relevant Director in consultation with the Committee for planning and licensing functions or,
- in time critical instances, the Chief Executive using special urgency provisions with the approval of the relevant Scrutiny Board Chair and Cabinet Member.

These arrangements were put in place as a temporary solution until the Government enacted the regulations for remote participation.

Initially, Cabinet, Scrutiny Boards and Licensing and Planning Committees will be rescheduled, followed by the other remaining committees. The Emergency Committee will continue to meet until all Council Members are able to access meetings using an electronic solution and we are confident that a Full Council can be held.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 A robust IT solution will be worked up that can accommodate the Council's meeting requirements. Once that is established, a revised interim calendar of meetings will be presented to the Emergency Committee for approval.
- 3.2 The pilot will be completed which will map out and help deliver targeted support and guidance to Members so as to ensure they can confidently participate in the remote committee meetings.