

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services)
to
Special Meeting of the Council
on
25 June 2020

Report prepared by: John Williams
Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services)

Supplementary Standing Orders – Remote Meetings

Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

On 23 April 2020, Supplementary Standing Orders were introduced to deal with remote and hybrid meetings, together with an associated Protocol on Virtual/ Remote Meetings.

In May 2020, these documents were subject to minor amendments and a Procedure Note on public speaking at remote meetings was added.

This report seeks Council's endorsement of the documents, subject to 3 additions.

2. Recommendations

That the Council endorses the Supplementary Standing Orders, Protocol on Virtual/ Remote Meetings and Procedure Note on public speaking at remote meetings attached at **Appendix 1**, subject to the 3 additions set out in 3.6.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 25 March 2020 the Coronavirus Act 2020 was passed and came into force. The Act provided for remote and hybrid Council meetings up until 7 May 2021. The detailed provisions were contained in the subsequent Local Authorities & Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority etc. Meetings) Regulations 2020.
- 3.2 On 23 April 2020, in accordance with the Act and Regulations, Supplementary Standing Orders ("Council Procedure Rules") were introduced to deal with remote and hybrid meetings at the Council, together with an associated Protocol. These documents were agreed in consultation with the Group Leaders pursuant to Article 15.02 of Part 2 of the Constitution.

3.3 In May 2020 the documents referred to in 3.2 were subject to minor amendments to reflect learning from remote meetings which had been held. A Procedure Note on public speaking at remote meetings was also added. Again, these documents were agreed in consultation with the Group Leaders pursuant to Article 15.02 of Part 2 of the Constitution. Copies of the 3 documents are attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Putting these arrangements in place ensured that the democratic system was able to operate again from 23 April, despite the difficult circumstances which the country faced. To date 2 Cabinet meetings have been held, 4 Scrutiny Committees, two Development Control Committee Meetings, an Audit Committee and several other regulatory committees. Remote meetings have proved an effective way of conducting business until such time as normal meetings can be resumed or hybrid meetings held. Of course there have been challenges, but officers have worked hard to resolve technical and practical issues. Furthermore, chairs and councillors have helped to ensure the democratic system can operate effectively.

3.5 It is clearly good practice for the Council to endorse the Supplementary Standing Orders and the two associated documents at the earliest opportunity. Accordingly, that is what this report recommends, subject to the following 3 additions:

- (i) Supplementary Standing Order 7 re voting – Replace the number 4 with 9 as MS Teams has been enhanced to display this increased number of portraits at any one time.
- (ii) Protocol – Preliminary Points. Under first bullet point add: *“You can upload a photograph of yourself to appear on MS Teams in place of the disc with your initials. However, you cannot upload anything else, including any photograph, picture, logo, slogan etc.”*
- (iii) Protocol – Joining a Microsoft Teams Meeting – Add an extra bullet point *“When a meeting is being webcast in audio only, there shall be no use of the record function on the MS Teams platform.”*

4. Background Papers

- The Coronavirus Act 2020
- The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority etc. Meetings) Regulations 2020.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – The current Supplementary Standing Orders, Protocol on Virtual/Remote Meetings and Procedure Note on public speaking at remote meetings.