

MINUTE EXTRACT

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

25 NOVEMBER, 2020

6 REMOTE MEETINGS UPDATE

Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance introduced his report that provided the Constitution and Standards Committee with an update in respect to the implementation of the programme of remote Committee meetings since April 2020 in direct response to the Covid pandemic and requested the Committee give consideration to the future application of Standing Order 11.1 'Representations' for remote meetings .

Steve Fox, Head of Democratic and Member Services informed the Constitution and Standards Committee on the work undertaken by Officers in the delivery of a full committee programme of remote council committee meetings since September 2020. He further informed that during first period of Covid-19 lockdown the Democratic Services team ran a series of Planning, Licensing, and other regulatory committee meetings, delivering in excess of 50 meetings. He added that during May and June a further 408 individual school admission appeals meetings had been successfully delivered remotely.

The Head of Democratic and Member Services apprised Members that this had been challenging, and the speed of transition had been difficult, but successful. He expressed his thanks to the political group office managers and IT department in their assistance in helping to support Councillors and his service in the delivery of meetings, and a series of Member training sessions covering meeting etiquette and the Chairing of meetings.

The Constitution and Standards Committee's attention was drawn to paragraph 3.3 of the Director's report that had identified a key concern in respect of engagement with members of the public and the provision whereby any member of the public can present questions and/or speak for up to 15 minutes at a committee meetings (or Council). Officers requested that in an effort to aid meeting management Members consider aligning the opportunities available to the public, and standardise a deadline of noon, 3 days prior to meeting for all methods of addressing committees.

The Chair sought Members views and comments on the matter of submission deadlines to help provide the public access to meetings alongside a practical way to administer the process.

Following a short debate and noting that any change to procedures would require the consent of Council, Members' also requested that this facility be further communicated to members of the public in the most practical manner.

Additional Recommendation

It was:

Moved by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

Seconded by Councillor Steve Williams

“That the provision in respect of public speaking, submission of public questions and statements is made known to members of the public by appropriate means.”

RESOLVED – That

(1) the report be noted;

(2) RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL that in respect to Standing Order 11.1 ‘Representations’ and in line with other provisions – the deadline for the public registering to speak be brought forward to no later than the midday three working days before the day of the meeting; and

(3) the provision in respect of public speaking, submission of public questions and statements is made known to members of the public by appropriate means.