



COUNCIL

Monday, 7 October 2024

REPORT TITLE:	SIX MONTH ATTENDANCE RULE S85 (1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OR LAW AND CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a Member of a Local Authority to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six-month consecutive period, unless permission for the absence is granted by the Authority in advance, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor. Without advance permission to be absent, loss of office is automatic and permission cannot be granted retrospectively.

The report requests that Councillor James Stuart-Laing is granted permission to be absent from Council meetings for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the absence of Councillor James Stuart-Laing from all Council and Committee Meetings be authorised and approved for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a Member of a Local Authority to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six-month consecutive period, unless permission for the absence is granted by the Authority in advance, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor. Councillor James Stuart-Liang has been unable to attend meetings due to ill health.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The proposal in this report is made to avoid Councillor James Stuart-Laing being disqualified from office for non-attendance during a period of ill health.

Agreeing to the waiver over a different time period other than until the end of the 2024/25 Municipal Year is an option that Members may wish to consider.

Were the Council not to approve the reason for absence, a vacancy would then arise on expiry of the six-month period of absence.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 ('Vacation of office by failure to attend meetings') requires that, if a member of a local authority fails to attend any meeting of the authority throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance at a meeting, they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.
- 3.2 Attendance in an official capacity at a relevant meeting of the Council is defined as attendance at a Committee or a Sub-Committee of the Council or at any meeting of a joint Committee or other such body discharging functions of the Council or at any meeting as a representative of the Council is deemed to be a meeting of the Council.
- 3.3 Once any councillor loses office through failure to attend for the six-month period, the disqualification cannot be overcome by the councillor subsequently resuming attendance. Nor can retrospective approval of the Council be sought for an extension.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As Member allowances are budgeted for, there are no financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If the recommendation set out in this report is not approved Councillor James Stuart-Laing would become disqualified due to the six month non-attendance rule if they are

unable to attend a meeting before 6 December 2023. Approval of continuing absence is allowed under Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 If the Council does not approve the recommendation set out in this report a Member may become automatically disqualified. This will mean that some electors will be under-represented until such time that a by-election has taken place.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Leader of Cllr Stuart Laing's Political Group has informed other Group Leaders on the request to approve a period of absence from meetings for Cllr James Stuart-Laing pursuant to section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Any Equality Implications are addressed in section 1.1 of the report and the recommendation.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environment and climate change implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Act 1972
Constitution

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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Council
Annual Council

29 July 2024
22 May 2024