



## **CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>Remote Meetings Update</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Director of Law and Governance</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report provides the 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 requests the Committee to give consideration to the future application of Standing Order 11.1 'Representations' for remote meetings .

This is not a key decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Constitution and Standards Committee are requested to

1. consider and comment on the report and
2. recommend to Council that in respect to Standing Order 11.1 'Representations' – the deadline for the public registering to speak be brought forward to no later than midday three working days before the day of the meeting, in line with the deadline for the submission of public questions.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Committee are requested to comment on and offer any feedback in respect to the holding and conducting of remote meetings over the last 8 months and give consideration to the future application of Standing Order 11.1 for remote Committee Meetings.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 Not amending Standing Order 11.1 or choosing an alternative deadline for registering to speak.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **3.1 Implementation of the Committee Programme**

In spite of the additional demands and challenges placed on Members and Officers by virtue of the Covid pandemic, a full programme of Committee meetings has been embarked upon since the adoption of the new Constitution in September 2020 and prior to that, Regulatory Committees and selected other Committees continued to meet between April and September 2020 predominantly to consider planning and licensing matters. A full list of meetings held between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 is listed below:-

- ACH O&S Committee Budget Proposals Scrutiny Workshop - 1
- Adult Social Care and Health Committee - 1
- Audit and Risk Management Committee - 1
- Children, Young People & Education Committee - 1
- Council - 3
- Economy Regeneration & Development Committee - 1
- Employment & Appointments Panel (Assistant Director: Asset Management and Investment) - 1
- Employment & Appointments Panel (Assistant Director: HR / Organisational Development) - 1
- Employment & Appointments Panel (Assistant Director: Neighbourhoods, Safety and Transport) - 1
- Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee - 1
- Housing Committee - 1
- Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee - 8
- Licensing Act Committee - 2
- Licensing Panel - 3
- Liverpool John Lennon Airport Consultative Committee - 1
- Local Pensions Board - 1
- Noise Monitoring Sub Committee - 2
- Pensions Committee - 1
- Planning Committee - 12
- Policy and Resources Committee - 1

- Regulatory and General Purposes Committee - 3
- Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee - 1
- Wirral Growth Company Board Meeting - 2

**Total – 50**

Members should also note that during the same period 408 individual Admission Appeals were held by remote means enabling parents to meet and have their cases heard by the Independent Appeals Panel.

### 3.2 Remote Meetings

The implementation of the Committee programme of remote meetings has been challenging for Members and Officers. The meetings are considerably more labour intensive in respect to the practical arrangements for holding a meeting. This is most evident when considering the arrangements for a Council Meeting. However, the effort has enabled Members to continue to meet remotely, be seen and heard as required by legislation and, significantly, for decisions to continue to be made and where appropriate for the public to be engaged.

The vast majority of Members have responded well to the additional demands placed upon them and can participate with little difficulty. Training has been provided in the use of Teams, Remote Meetings Procedures were adopted at the Council Meeting in July 2020 and were subsequently incorporated into the Constitution. To support Committee Chairs a meeting etiquette protocol was designed which has stood up well to the running of meetings. Additional support has also been provided to Committee Chairs for meeting preparation.

Officers in the IT section have engaged with all Members to address any specific technical difficulties that they may have experienced including connectivity, line speeds and Surface Pro reliability. Group Office Managers and Democratic Services Officers remain on hand to support Members whilst remote meetings continue.

It should be noted that a system which is so reliant on the use of technology has not been without problems. Remote meetings are naturally longer and involve roll calls on attendance and votes to enable members of the public viewing the webcast to see and hear a member's voting intention. Furthermore, the support provided to the Chairs during the course of a meeting is an area that continues to develop. Work is on-going between Democratic Services Officers, IT and Public-i , the Council's software provider to make the webcast of the meetings as reliable as possible.

### 3.3 Public Speaking/Representations

Enabling members of the public to speak and engage at Committee meetings is a difficult process and has proved problematic. One of the main difficulties is that currently under section 11.1 of the Standing Orders 'Representations' it states

*A member of the public may speak on up to two non-procedural items on any Agenda if notice has been given no later than 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. The Mayor may, at his or her discretion, limit the number of speakers and the time each speaker may speak for. No speech should exceed three minutes.*

*Each member of the public may only speak once. Public speaking on any one item shall not exceed 10 minutes, subject to the Mayor's discretion to extend the time if he or she considers it appropriate.*

The 15 minute deadline is not practical for officers to make the necessary arrangements for the public to participate. Consequently, the Constitution and Standards Committee are requested to support the proposal that the deadline for registering to speak be brought forward to no later than midday three working days before the day of the meeting, in line with the deadline for the submission of public questions.

### 3.3 Future Meetings

The use of Microsoft Teams for the holding of remote meetings and likewise Public-i software to enable the continued webcasting of Council and Committee meetings has enabled the continuation of the democratic process and the bringing together of Members to make decisions in a public forum. Members have now also started to meet remotely for Chair and Group spokesperson briefings with Directors, workshops have been held in respect to the setting of the budget and a number of all Member Briefing sessions have been held. Officers continue to plan for a number of eventualities including the potential future return to a meeting room, the continuation of remote meetings or a combination of the two in a hybrid format.

## 4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## 5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Amending the Constitution does require the consent of full Council.

5.2 Temporary Standing Orders and Protocols were adopted by Council in respect of Remote Meetings and are included in the Constitution as Part 4(1)(a)

## 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 There are no risks arising from this report.

## 8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Members have been engaged in respect to a number of the issues outlined in this report both formally and informally over the course of the past six months.

## 9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are a number of practical environmental benefits associated with the holding of remote meetings including reduced Member and Officer travel and fewer Council buildings being open.

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## APPENDICES

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

Constitution  
Remote Meeting Procedure Rules

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Annual Meeting	<b>28<sup>th</sup> September 2020</b>