

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Corporate Performance Panel		
DATE:	26 May 2020		
TITLE:	Review of Standing Orders in relation to remote meetings		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy Development		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader of the Council		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Alexa Baker, Monitoring Officer		
OPEN/EXEMPT	OPEN	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:

This report presents draft amendments (attached as Appendix 1) to the Standing Orders within the Borough Council's Constitution to reflect recent legislation with regards to local authority meetings.

The Covid-19 outbreak and Central Government's response in March 2020 had a significant impact on local authority meetings. The key piece of legislation surrounding local authority meetings, the Local Government Act 1972, meant that in order for a valid local authority meeting to take place, all those attending had to be present in the same location. This resulted in cancellation of all Borough Council meetings due to an inability to fulfil this legislative requirement.

On 4 April 2020 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 "2020 Regulations") came into force. These 2020 Regulations contain provisions which enable local authorities to hold valid meetings remotely.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/392/contents/made>

The 2020 Regulations already apply to the Borough Council's Constitution automatically (at the moment, until 6 May 2021), however for the purposes of transparency, clarity and to include additional provisions relating to the conduct of remote meetings, for example in relation to voting, this report is brought forward to recommend that the Borough Council's Standing Orders be amended to reflect the 2020 Regulations and to capture the key requirements for how the Borough Council will conduct its remote meetings.

KEY ISSUES

The key issues addressed within the attached draft amendments are as follows:

- The removal of the strict requirement to hold an Annual Meeting;
- Extending the definition of a local authority meeting being 'open to the public' to include where access is possible through remote means;
- Making the Borough Council's website the primary means for publication of open, public documents;
- Enabling local authority meetings to occur in more than one 'place', which includes virtual, remote locations;
- Provisions for when there are technical difficulties with remote access;
- The statutory requirements for a Member being in remote attendance of a meeting;
- The statutory requirements for a member of the public being in remote attendance of a meeting;
- Voting; and

- Standing Order 34 process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Corporate Performance Panel is requested to consider and comment on the draft amendments prior to their submission to Cabinet and Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To ensure that the Borough Council's Standing Orders reflect the most up-to-date legislation and capture the key requirements for how the Borough Council will conduct its remote meetings.