



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCIL

Date: 27 July 2020

Title: Council Meetings and Appointments

Purpose of the Report: To seek Council decision regarding future meetings and appointment of Chair and Vice Chair.

Contact Officer: Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
Ian Haynes, Responsible Health & Safety Officer

Corporate Objective/s		To consolidate processes and procedures, ensuring operational efficiency.
Implications:		
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To ensure Council decision making can take place despite COVID-19.
Legal	Yes	To consider the opportunities afforded by temporary legislation in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 To endorse the holding of an additional Council meeting on Monday, 24 August (to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams).
- 1.3 To endorse the move of the September Partnership Committee meeting from 10 September 2020 to 3 September 2020.
- 1.4 To resolve whether Council wishes to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair prior to the next Annual Council Meeting in May 2021 and if so, when. The appointment to continue until the following Annual Council Meeting in May 2022.
- 1.5 To endorse a further temporary amendment to Standing Orders such that Council meetings may take place in premises other than the White House, for the reasons set out in paragraph 5. This temporary amendment to remain in place until such time as Council resolves otherwise.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.2 Further to the Coronavirus Act 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 came into effect in April. These provide for temporary amendments to permanent legislation as a result of the pandemic.
- 2.3 The Regulations include specified conditions to enable local councils to **meet remotely** and the provision to **defer any appointment which would normally be made at an annual meeting of the authority**, or to **alter when that appointment be made**.

3. REMOTE MEETINGS

- 3.1 To date, two sub committee meetings and one committee meeting have successfully taken place remotely using Microsoft Teams. Members of the public have been able to participate by internet or telephone.
- 3.2 Experience has demonstrated that remote meetings require additional officer support and additional time, given the inevitable slight delays in transmissions and the potential need to record votes by roll call. Now more than ever, it is important to manage the meeting agenda to allow for sufficient time for debate and decision-making.
- 3.3 After careful consideration, the agenda for the Council meeting on 27 July 2020 could not include all items due for discussion. It is therefore proposed to hold an additional meeting of Council in August 2020 prior to proceeding with the scheduled Calendar of Meetings from September 2020.
- 3.4 Council is also asked to endorse a change in meeting date for the Partnership Committee from 10 September to 3 September 2020.

4. APPOINTMENTS

- 3.1 Given the provision to alter when appointments be made, the Council is asked to consider whether it would wish to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair prior to the next Annual Council Meeting in May 2021.
- 4.2 For practical reasons such as arranging for presentation of monies to the Mayor's chosen charities, should Council wish to make an earlier appointment then it is asked to set a specific date for doing so. Council meetings are already scheduled for 28 September 2020, 25 January 2021 and 26 April 2021.
- 4.3 In accordance with Standing Order 4e)iv), the Chairs of standing committees appointed at the last Council Annual Meeting will continue to serve until the next Council Annual Meeting, unless Council decides otherwise.

- 4.4 In accordance with Standing Order 4e)v), any committees other than standing committees will appoint their own Chair and Vice Chair at the first meeting of that committee or sub committee.
- 4.5 In accordance with Standing Order 4k), Chairs of existing Task and Finish groups remain in place for the duration of the project.

5. FUTURE MEETINGS

- 4.1 The specified conditions set out in the Regulations mean that at any formal meeting, participants and members of the public attending the meeting must “be able to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard, and where practicable, be seen by, anyone else attending”.
- 4.2 Heretofore Councils have met remotely via digital platforms or teleconferencing platforms, in accordance with the Regulations and due to the prohibition on gatherings of more than two households (indoors) or 6 individuals (outdoors).
- 4.3 Government ruling on gatherings is now starting to change, with different guidance issued for different settings. For example, the guidance for work related meetings differs from the guidance for use of community centres.
- 4.4 In addition, the guidance on gatherings and on social distancing has changed and may continue to change.
- 4.5 This updated guidance gives rise to the question of resuming actual meetings rather than continuing to hold remote meetings. NALC and SLCC both continue to strongly advise that meetings be held remotely for safety reasons.
- 4.6 Any “actual” i.e. face to face meetings will require a number of steps to be followed, including justification for the need for a face to face meeting, approval of a risk assessment and consideration of mitigation measures for anyone deemed clinically vulnerable. The **attached** checklist has been jointly published by NALC and SLCC to help inform the decision to hold a face to face meeting.
- 4.7 A further consideration is the requirement to comply with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960. Attendance by members of the public must be possible, without restriction. This will be an important consideration when considering the capacity of venues for face to face meetings.
- 4.8 The two considerations above give rise to the potential for hybrid meetings to take place. However, facilitating a hybrid meeting would be likely to require some investment in additional technology to ensure that all participants could take part equally.
- 4.9 In light of the above, no decision can currently be made about whether or when actual meetings might again be possible. Officers will continue to monitor Government guidance and seek Council approval where needed.

- 4.10 In the event that actual meetings or hybrid meetings may become feasible, Council is asked to endorse a temporary amendment to Standing Order 3a to specify that Council meetings may be held in a location other than the White House. This **may** allow for use of larger venues where social distancing may be easier to manage and where attendance numbers may be higher.
- 4.11 As set out in the NALC guidance and attached checklist, any decision to hold a face to face or hybrid meeting must be made by the Council and subject to Council approval of the steps outlined.

End.