



Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 22 February 2021

Title: Calendar of Meetings 2021-2022

Purpose of the Report: To seek Committee views on a proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 and to advise meetings considerations from May 2021.

Contact Officer: Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s		To consolidate processes and procedures, ensuring operational efficiency and a structure which will underpin future service delivery by the Town Council.
Implications:		
Financial	None	
Human Resources	None	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To continue to ensure operational efficiency and effective scrutiny and decision-making processes through the annual calendar of formal meetings.
Procedural/Legal	Yes	The statutory number of Council meetings and the statutory Parish meeting are included in the proposed calendar. Current temporary legislation regarding meetings expires on 7 May 2021.
Risk/Health & Safety	None	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should the Policy and Finance Committee be minded:-

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 To approve that the draft Calendar of Meetings for 2021-22 be circulated to Councillors for awareness and informal consideration, but to await a further update at the April meeting regarding Coronavirus legislation before any formal recommendations to Council.
- 1.3 To consider whether to write to Andrew Selous MP to press for an extension to The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow remote meetings to take place after 7 May 2021.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's Calendar of Meetings has followed an established annual pattern since the adoption of a revised Committee structure on 27 June 2016. The amendments included a reduction in the number of Sub-Committees and a change in standing committees to reflect the service area responsibilities of the Town Council.
- 2.2 The revised structure has enabled each Committee to focus on the projects and services within its specific remit and to authorise expenditure and review future budgets accordingly.
- 2.3 In 2020, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and first national lockdown, emergency procedures were endorsed by Council at its extraordinary meeting held 20 March 2020 to allow decisions to continue to be made although meetings could not lawfully be held.
- 2.4 Following changes in legislation in April 2020, the Council moved to holding virtual meetings online from July 2020, resuming its normal pattern of meetings for the remainder of 2020-21.
- 2.5 The legislation which permits remote meetings has a sunset clause of 7 May 2021 and at present it is unknown whether this can or will be extended. Sector bodies including the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Councils are lobbying Government for an extension to the Regulations.

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR 2021-2022

- 3.1 A draft Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 is **attached at Appendix A** for consideration by Committee and is based on the structure and meeting frequency endorsed by Council on 27 June 2016. However, the permitted format of meetings from 7 May 2021 and any local or national restrictions or guidelines relating to Coronavirus may necessitate changes to be considered.
- 3.2 In the event that legislation is extended to permit continuation of remote meetings, no impact on the proposed meeting calendar is envisaged.
- 3.3 In the event that the legislation is not extended and the only option is to resume face to face meetings, consideration will need to be given by Council to:
 - Capacity, suitability and availability of meeting space
 - Likelihood of inaccuracy of meetings
 - Frequency and duration of meetings
 - Decision making if meetings cannot be held
 - Staffing requirements and duty of care implications
 - Mitigation measures (distancing, masks, screens, staggered arrival/departure times, one way system, ventilation) to protect all meeting attendees including the public
 - Cost implications (equipment, impact on other bookings, additional cleaning, additional set up/clear away time)

- 3.4 At present there is no provision in law to restrict or limit attendance by the public at meetings and this may present significant issues as any venue will have a finite capacity, once Covid secure mitigation measures are in place.
- 3.5 Council must approve a Covid secure risk assessment for meetings before any such “in person” meetings can take place.
- 3.6 Should it become possible to hold hybrid meetings, the above considerations will still apply but the question of venue and equipment will become more pressing, requiring internet connection and screens as a minimum and probably requiring microphones.
- 3.7 The above considerations may have an impact on the proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2021-22, particularly those due to happen at the start of the municipal year. NALC has published guidance (**attached at Appendix B**) which includes matters for consideration, such as holding the Annual Council Meeting before 7 May to allow it to be held remotely. The current Regulations permit councils to hold their Annual Council Meeting on a date other than the usual date of the third Monday in May.
- 3.8 Should Council deem it necessary at its meeting on 26 April 2021 to hold the Annual Council Meeting before 7 May 2021, legislation (LGA 1972) allows that this could happen on 4/5/6 May as long as an agenda is published with 3 clear days notice.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 At the time of writing, there is no certainty as to how council meetings may proceed from 7 May 2021. It is therefore recommended that a further report be provided to the next Committee meeting on 19 April (or that an earlier extraordinary meeting be convened if necessary) to consider implications and make recommendations to Council for its meeting on 26 April 2021.
- 4.2 The Council has assurance that operational impact can be minimised as the resolution made on 20 March 2020 remains valid (Minute reference 89 see below):

RESOLVED to endorse the following proposed emergency delegation to the Town Clerk (or a senior Officer in the absence of the Town Clerk):

That with the exception of:

a) matters which the law states cannot be delegated and are reserved for full Council, and b) any employment matters requiring the involvement of a Committee:

Any decision requiring Committee or full Council approval, where it is not possible to convene a lawful meeting, is hereby delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with a number of Councillors equal to the quorum for

a meeting of the body concerned. This includes approval of any expenditure outside existing delegations.

Where practicable, the Councillors to be consulted shall include the Chair and Vice Chair of the body concerned. The Councillors consulted must not all be members of the same Group.

In the event that any Chairs or Vice Chairs are incapacitated during the operational period, then they should nominate a substitute for the period they are incapacitated and notify the Town Clerk accordingly.

The above emergency delegation authority to come into effect immediately following the Council meeting held on 20 March 2020 and to remain in effect until rescinded at a subsequent meeting of the Council.

End.