

Report to: **Governance Committee**

Date: **2 October 2020**

By: **Assistant Chief Executive**

Title: **Coronavirus (Covid-19) temporary arrangements**

Purpose: **To review temporary measures in relation to Council meetings agreed by the County Council in May 2020 as a result of Covid-19 disruption.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governance Committee is recommended to recommend the County Council to:

1) agree to the continuation of the measures previously agreed by Council and set out in para 1.2 of the report; and

2) review these measures at the July 2021 meeting of the Council or as soon as practicable thereafter.

1. Background

1.1 In May 2020 the County Council agreed recommendations from the Committee in relation to a number of temporary measures to help enable the County Council's business to be conducted efficiently throughout the period of disruption due to Covid-19. A copy of the report considered by the Committee is attached as Appendix 1. The Council agreed that the measures would be reviewed at the October meeting of the Council or as soon as practicable thereafter.

1.2 The temporary measures approved by the Council were:

- to approve the approach in relation to Lead Member decisions being made virtually and to its continuation;
- to agree that the Leader will assume all the powers of the Cabinet where required;
- to agree delegations to officers in relation to the functions of the Planning, Pensions and Governance Committees and the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel;
- to agree that Member non-attendance related to Covid-19 be considered as an absence approved by the Council;
- to agree that the Chief Executive (or in her absence the Assistant Chief Executive) be authorised to cancel or postpone meetings, in consultation with the relevant Chair or Cabinet Member;

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Since May a large number of virtual meetings have been held under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 which were enacted by Government to enable councillors to attend remotely during Covid-19 restrictions; these regulations are currently in place until 7 May 2021. In general, the holding of virtual meetings has been a success, councillor attendance at such meetings has been good and decision making has largely continued as normal. As a result, there has no need to rely on or use the measures outlined above. However, there remains a risk that there could be practical and capacity constraints in the coming months which will place unavoidable limitations on the holding of meetings. It is therefore proposed that the temporary measures previously agreed

be extended until July 2021 to ensure that provision continues to be in place to allow essential business to be conducted in the event of disruption to meetings. This will allow the Governance Committee, which will be appointed in May following the election, to make recommendations to the Council.

2.2 In July 2020 the County Council considered and agreed recommendations from the Committee regarding a supplementary section of Standing Orders to formalise the approach to virtual meetings, taking the provisions of the national regulations into account. The supplementary Standing Orders confirmed the position of what constitutes a valid formal virtual meeting until the expiry of the Regulations in May 2021 and therefore also support the continuation of core County Council business during the pandemic.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Committee is recommended to recommend to the County Council to reaffirm the previous decision of the Council in relation to temporary measures to support the continuation of Council business during Covid-19 disruption and agree to these measures being reviewed in July 2021, or as soon as practicable thereafter, in order to tie in with the expiry of the Regulations and the supplementary Standing Orders :

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None