

**To: Annual Council
20 May 2020**

**Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules
Executive Director: Delivery**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks Council's approval to the Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules which makes amendments to the Council Constitution, in particular to the Council and Committee Rules and Access to Information provisions, in consequence of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ('the Regulations').

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules appended to this report are approved.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Regulations have an automatic amending effect on the Council's existing rules and were applied immediately by the Council in order to run committee and Executive meetings remotely. It is good practice, even with express mandatory standing orders, to have these adopted formally by Full Council at the first opportunity to do so. The Annual Meeting of the Council is the first opportunity for Council to approve these rules.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 None.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ('the Regulations') came into force on 4 April 2020. These Regulations make provisions for remote access to local authority meetings held before 7 May 2021 by Members of the authority and the press and public.
- 5.2 The effect of the Regulations on the Council's Constitution is to insert what are, in effect, mandatory standing orders for those authorities that wish to hold meetings remotely, either wholly or partially. The attached Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules provide the means and guidance for the conduct of any remote meeting of the Council, and its various Committees and Sub-Committees, held under the provisions of the Regulations. As such they should be read in conjunction with the Council's Constitution. Wherever there is a conflict, these Remote Meetings Procedure Rules take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.

- 5.3 The Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules draw significantly on the model Standing Orders produced by the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG). They have also been informed by the experience gained so far in running Planning Committee and the Executive remotely via Microsoft Teams Live Event.
- 5.3 These revised procedure rules exist only on a temporary basis, having effect between 4th April 2020 and 7th May 2021.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The legal basis for the holding of virtual meetings is referenced in the report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There is an impact on resources within Democratic & Registration Services to produce and manage remote meetings accessible by the public. This may restrict the number of remote meetings that can be supported at any one time.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 Not applicable.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 The Live Events facility within Microsoft Teams allows members of the public to have live access to meetings through their personal computer and mobile devices. The meetings are broadcast and recorded.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 It is vital for good democracy that councillors are able to attend meetings to discuss and vote on matters in public, unless there are sound legal reasons for excluding the press and public from their decision-making. The unprecedented national health crisis made this impossible to do until appropriate legislation was passed to enable meetings to be held remotely and the Council decided that it wished to hold virtual meetings to which the press and public have access.

Background Papers

LLG/ADSO Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules

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