

Extension of Remote Meetings Provisions to 21 July 2022

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Purpose of the Report

1. To request a brief extension to Council's decision taken on 16 December 2021 to hold meetings other than Council remotely until 8 July 2022 to 21 July 2022.

Public Interest

2. Part 3 of the Council's Constitution sets out who within the Council has the power to do what, sets out any associated limitations and, in particular, sets out which decisions can be taken by members and which can be taken by officers.
3. The District Executive and Full Council have previously agreed to allocate certain executive and non-executive matters to others, and it is important that these changes are made clear on the face of the Constitution.
4. This report is seeking a short extension to the Council's agreed position on remote consultative meetings and associated delegation pending a detailed report to Council on 21 July 2022.

Recommendation

5. That the delegation in respect of remote meetings given by Council on 16 December 2021 is extended to 21 July 2022 for all meetings apart from Council.

Background

6. On 15 April 2021, in view of the imminent lapse of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, Council decided to:
 - (a) continue to enable members to hold remote, virtual meetings using available technology; and
 - (b) amend Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council's Constitution to allow those remote meetings to function as consultative bodies and delegate decisions, including Executive and Quasi-Judicial decisions, to the Chief Executive (or the relevant Director in the Chief Executive's absence) in



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consultation with those meetings and those members to whom the decision would otherwise have been delegated under Part 3 of the Constitution.

7. The delegated authority given on 15 April was reviewed by Council at their meeting on 8 July 2021, when it was agreed to extend it for a further 6 months. A subsequent review by Council on 16 December 2021 extended the delegation for a further period of six months to 8 July 2022 for all meetings apart from Council itself.

Report

8. Since Council met in December 2021, elections to Somerset County Council/Somerset (unitary) Council have taken place and a significant number of SSDC members have been elected to the new authority. The first meeting of the new Executive of that Council has not yet taken place, but given the short period remaining before vesting day it is likely that additional meetings will need to take place. To enable proper consideration of the impact of any additional County Council meetings to be taken into account when South Somerset District Council considers its position on remote meetings in the period to vesting day, it is suggested that the current delegation in respect of remote meetings is extended from 8 July to 21 July 2022 pending a report to that meeting on remote meetings in the period to 31 March 2023. It is proposed that the report will include the impact of County Council and associated Local Government Review meetings on South Somerset District Council together with an update on the remote meetings position of the other Somerset councils to that date.

Financial Implications

9. Although there have been budget savings in travel allowances to attend meetings, there are no specific financial implications arising from the subject matter of this report.

Legal Implications

10. There are no specific legal implications arising from the subject matter of this report.

Council Plan Implications

11. There are no specific Council Plan implications arising from the subject matter of this report

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

12. Although the use of Zoom and Teams software to hold virtual meetings has reduced the need to travel to attend Council meetings and therefore resulted in reduced carbon emissions from vehicles across the district, there are no specific carbon emissions and climate change implications arising from the subject matter of this report.



Equality and Diversity Implications

13. There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising from the subject matter of this report.

Background Papers

Council Constitution - Part 3

Agenda and minutes of Council meetings – 19 March 2020, August 2020, 15 April 2021, 08 July 2021, 16 December 2021.