

Attendance at meetings

Date: 12th January 2022

Report of: City Solicitor

Report to: Council

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- 1 Further to a report considered by Council in April 2020 this report seeks authorisation of the Council to the absence of all Councillors from meetings of the authority from the date of this meeting for a period of 6 months in order that any Members not having the opportunity to attend a qualifying meeting prior to and during the period of the Pandemic are not at risk of inadvertent disqualification.

Recommendations

- 2 Council is asked to approve the absence of all Councillors from meetings of the authority from the date of this meeting for a period of 6 months.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 3 Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 makes provision in relation to member attendance at meetings. It provides that if a member fails to attend qualifying meetings for a period of 6 consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, they shall cease to be a member of the authority unless, before the expiry of that period the authority has approved such non-attendance.
- 4 As a result of the ongoing concerns of the Coronavirus, and particularly the recent emergence of a new more transmissible variant, some meetings of Committees, Boards, Panels and Full Council have been cancelled.
- 5 Where qualifying meetings have been cancelled, in some cases Members have come together as a consultative forum but in these circumstances attendance by Members does not amount to qualifying meeting under the Local Government Act 1972.
- 6 In order to avoid Members being inadvertently disqualified the City Solicitor advises that in the circumstances it would be reasonable for full Council to grant a general authorisation of absence for all members from the date of this meeting and for a period of up to 6 months, with this permission being reviewed as soon as possible before the expiry of this period should normal meeting arrangements recommence.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 7 This decision will prevent any Member of Council not having the opportunity to attend a qualifying meeting prior to and during the period set out being at risk of inadvertent disqualification.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 8 Group Whips have been notified of the intention to bring this report to full Council for consideration.

What are the resource implications?

- 9 There are no specific resource implications associated with this report.

What are the legal implications?

- 10 Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that a member of a local authority loses office if they do not attend a meeting at least once in any six-month period.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 11 The key risk would be Members of Council not having the opportunity to attend a qualifying meeting prior to and during the period set out being at risk of inadvertent disqualification.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 12 In the current climate of uncertainty regarding the Coronavirus and the recently identified variant it is important to have in place arrangements that would ensure the Council still has all 99 Councillors representing their wards and constituents.

How will success be measured?

- 13 Ensuring that all 99 Members of the Council are eligible to remain a Councillor.

What is the timetable for implementation?

- 14 The implementation of the decision would be immediately after the decision is made.

Appendices

- 15 None.

Background papers

- 16 None