



## Report to Council

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**Report of:** Director of Legal & Governance

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**Date:** 9 September 2020

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**Subject:** Agenda Items for the October Meeting of the Council

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**Author of Report:** Jason Dietsch (Head of Democratic and Member Services)  
Tel: 0114 2734117

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### Summary:

This report provides details of proposed changes to the format of the meeting of the Council to be held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and seeks approval to revisions to the Council Procedure Rules (CPR) to apply for that meeting.

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**Recommendations:** The Council is recommended to:-

1. Agree that the October meeting of the Council will include Public Questions and Petitions, and Members Questions, but that Notices of Motion are not to be a feature of the meeting and that, instead, an officer update will be provided to Council on a topical subject; and
  2. Approve, in order to implement the changes proposed in paragraph 1 above, the temporary revisions to Part 4 of the Constitution – (Council Procedure Rules), as set out in the report, which are to apply only for the duration of that meeting.
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**Background Papers:** No background papers. The report submitted to Council on 12 August 2020 (Agenda Items for the September Meeting of the Council) is appended for reference.

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial &amp; Commercial implications</b>
NO:
<b>Legal implications</b>
YES – Cleared by Gill Duckworth
<b>Equality of Opportunity implications</b>
NO:
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities implications</b>
N/A
<b>Human rights implications</b>
N/A
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
N/A
<b>Economic impact</b>
N/A
<b>Community safety implications</b>
N/A
<b>Human resources implications</b>
N/A
<b>Property implications</b>
N/A
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
None
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in</b>
N/A
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
YES
<b>Press release</b>
NO

**1. Background and Proposals**

- 1.1 The October meeting of the Council will be the second ordinary meeting of the Council to be held by remote means. Many other of the Council's formal decision making meetings have now been reinstated following the outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.
- 1.2 The Regulations introduced in April 2020 [*The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020*] give more flexibility to local authorities and enable them to hold meetings remotely. Consequential amendments to Council Procedure Rules incorporate the effect of the regulations while they are in force. This means that elected members, members of the public and officers can participate in meetings using the Zoom virtual platform. Meetings are streamed through the Public-i webcasting system in order to facilitate public access in compliance with those Regulations.
- 1.3 This report sets out proposed changes to the format of the meeting of the Council to be held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and seeks approval to revisions to the Council Procedure Rules (CPR) to apply for that meeting as part of the phased approach to the reinstatement of all aspects of the ordinary meetings of the Council.
- 1.4 By way of further background, the report considered at the Extraordinary Meeting of Council on 12 August 2020 concerning 'Agenda Items for the September Meeting of the Council' is appended to this report. That report sets out some considerations for the holding of remote meetings of full Council in the present circumstances of the Coronavirus pandemic, drawing from the experience of operating remote meetings of other bodies of the Council.
- 1.5 The proposed approach will give an opportunity for learning to take place from the September meeting of Council and from the experience of other meetings held remotely. Other considerations are outlined in paragraph 1.6 of the report submitted to Council on 12 August, which is appended to this report. The proposal will also allow further discussions to be held with leading Members in relation to the format and arrangements for future Council meetings. To this end, additional meetings have been scheduled with the Whips of the political groups represented on the Council, which will focus on the arrangements for Council meetings.
- 1.6 Ordinary meetings of the Council have certain regular items of business. The duration of the ordinary meetings are normally three hours and 30 minutes. Paragraph 5.7 of the Council Procedure Rules (set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution) states that Ordinary meetings of the Council will:-
- (a) elect a person to preside if the Chair and Deputy Chair are not present;
  - (b) consider the extent to which the public and press may be excluded from the meeting;

- (c) receive any apologies for absence from Members of the Council;
- (d) receive declarations by Members of interest in the matters to be considered at the meeting;
- (e) receive any communications or announcements from the Lord Mayor, the Leader or the Chief Executive;
- (f) receive public questions and petitions;
- (g) receive questions from Members of the Council in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 16 and 32;
- (h) receive any reports relating to matters reserved to the Council.
- (i) consider motions of which notice has been submitted by Members of the Council in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.
- (j) receive any reports from the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny and Policy Development and the Council's Committees
- (k) receive any presentations on matters of significant interest to the City;
- (l) approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting; and
- (m) make any changes to the memberships of its Committees and appointments to outside bodies.

1.7 In terms of the proposed format for the October meeting of the Council, the views of the political groups on the Council have been sought in relation to the elements of an Ordinary meeting which are considered the most important, taking into account the factors identified in paragraph 1.6 above. There was a difference of opinion in relation to the inclusion of political debate via Notices of Motion. The largest political group on the Council has indicated that they would wish for the October meeting of Council to follow a similar format to the September meeting and that Notices of Motion would not be a feature of the meeting and that, instead, an officer update be provided to Council on a topical subject. The two opposition groups have indicated that they would wish to see Notices of Motion included as part of the agenda for the October meeting. It has also been suggested by the largest opposition group that this could include an option to have one Notice of Motion from each political group at the October meeting and that account is made for this within the allocation and formula of Motions for the rest of the Municipal Year.

1.8 It is proposed that the October meeting of the Council will include Public Questions and Petitions, and Members Questions, but that Notices of Motion are not to be a feature of the meeting and that, instead, an officer update be provided to Council on a topical subject. Furthermore, discussions will take place with leading Members concerning arrangements for Council meetings from November onwards. In order to implement the changes proposed for the October meeting, it will be necessary to approve a revision to the Council Procedure Rules, to apply only for the duration of that meeting, by the removal of sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph 5.7 of those Rules, i.e. to remove “*consider motions of which notice has been submitted by Members of the Council in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10*”

1.9 Agreement to the proposals outlined in paragraph 1.8 would result in the following agenda for the October meeting:-

- Apologies For Absence
- Declarations of Interest
- Public Questions and Petitions
- Members’ Questions
- Minutes of Previous Council Meeting
- Changes to Memberships of Committees & Appointments to External Bodies
- An officer update to be provided to Council on a topical subject (presentation, followed by questions from Members of the Council)

## 2. **Legal Implications**

2.1 The main legal implications are covered in the body of the report. The report contains proposals for how the Council meetings will operate in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

## 3. **Financial & Commercial Implications**

3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the proposals in the report.

## 4. **Equality of Opportunity Implications**

4.1 The proposals in the report include reinstating accessibility of the formal decision-making process and enabling people in the City to participate. An Equality Impact Assessment was produced relating to arrangements for remote meetings. Equality implications will be considered as part of the phased approach to the reinstatement of all aspects of the ordinary meetings of the Council.

## 5. **Recommendations**

5.1 Council is recommended to:

1. Agree that the October meeting of the Council will include Public Questions and Petitions, and Members Questions, but that Notices of Motion are not to be a feature of the meeting and that, instead, an officer update will be provided to Council on a topical subject; and
2. Approve, in order to implement the changes proposed in paragraph 1 above, the temporary revisions to Part 4 of the Constitution – (Council Procedure Rules), as set out in the report, which are to apply only for the duration of that meeting.

**Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal & Governance)  
Monitoring Officer**