

COUNCIL	DATE 25.11.2020	ITEM NO 9
TITLE Proposed changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic	WARD (S) Not applicable	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer	CABINET MEMBER Leader of the Council	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Non-exempt report	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING? Yes	

1. **Decision required**

This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker.

Council is requested to:

- 1.1 Approve the changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic as set out in the report.
- 1.2 Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the temporary changes to the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution as set out in Appendix B.

2. **Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 With London moving to Tier 2 COVID-19 restrictions on 17 October and the subsequent national restrictions coming into force on 5 November, the Council is presently balancing the need to manage its response to the second wave of the pandemic in a wide range of areas whilst also continuing to operate a full range of essential services to residents and businesses.
- 2.2 Given the need to focus available resources on the second wave of the pandemic and the provision of essential services, the Leader of the Council, the Mayor and the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny agreed to postpone non-essential committee meetings until the end of December 2020. The Calendar of Meetings will be reviewed on a monthly basis to see if further cancellations should take place beyond December in light of the circumstances surrounding the pandemic at that particular time.

- 2.3 For the same reason (ie the need to focus the available resources of the organisation), this report recommends temporary changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will also make the best use of Council time during the second wave, allowing Councillors to focus on the highest priority issues for the Borough whilst not compromising democratic accountability.
- 2.4 The Monitoring Officer is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date version of the Constitution. Article 15.02(a) of the Council's Constitution states that Full Council may change the Constitution, but only after considering a proposal by the Monitoring Officer.

Proposed Changes

- 2.5 For those Ordinary Council meetings which are expected to take place during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (namely 27 January 2021, 24 February 2021 and 31 March 2021), it is proposed that the items for business to be considered should be as listed in Appendix B of this report instead of the usual items in Appendix A. These dates take into account the lead time for Council meetings and the amount of advance work carried out by Directorates to provide information for the meetings.
- 2.6 Whilst most of the items in Appendix B are already included in the agendas for ordinary meetings, it is worth explaining the intention behind item 7 (Oral Questions by Councillors to Cabinet Members or Committee Chairs).
- 2.7 In the absence of written public and Member questions, the time for oral questions will be extended from 10 minutes to a maximum of 30 minutes. As well as asking their own questions, Councillors will be encouraged to gather questions from residents via their usual communication channels. This will enable Ward Councillors to represent their residents and ask questions at the Council meetings on the most important issues within their Wards.
- 2.8 Alternatively, if members of the public prefer to engage with the Council via e-mail, they can submit questions via #AskGreenwich.
- 2.9 The Mayor and the Chief Executive will determine any items of urgent business under item 17.
- 2.10 If it was the case that all COVID-19 restrictions relating to the Borough were removed before 31 March 2021, the temporary changes would be reviewed and a further report submitted to the Council meeting which follows their removal.

2.11 The existing text in the Council Procedure Rules is set out at Appendix A. The temporary changes are shown at Appendix B.

3. **Available Options**

3.1 Approve the changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic as set out in the report and authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the temporary changes to the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution which are set out in Appendix B.

3.2 Make no changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings.

3.3 Ask the Monitoring Officer to consider alternative changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings during the second wave of the pandemic.

4. **Preferred Option**

4.1 Approve the changes to the items of business for Ordinary Council meetings during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic as set out in the report and authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the temporary changes to the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution which are set out in Appendix B.

5. **Reasons for Recommendations**

5.1 The preferred option will enable the Council to focus available resources on the second wave of the pandemic and the provision of essential services.

6. **Consultation Results**

6.1 There is no requirement to consult on this proposal.

7. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Legal including Human Rights Act</p>	<p>Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to prepare and keep up to date constitutions containing their standing orders, code of conduct for members, any other information they considered appropriate and ‘such information as the Secretary of State may direct’.</p> <p>The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 make provision for meetings to be held remotely where they are required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021. The authority is permitted under Part 2 Section 4(1) to “alter the frequency, move or cancel” meetings “without requirement for further notice”.</p> <p>Given that this report recommends temporary changes to the Constitution, it requires approval by Full Council.</p>	<p>John Scarborough, Director of Legal Services, 16 November 2020</p>
<p>Finance and other resources including procurement implications</p>	<p>There are no financial implications arising from this report.</p>	<p>Damon Cook, Director of Finance, 17 November 2020</p>
<p>Equalities</p>	<p>The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.</p>	<p>John Scarborough, Director of Legal Services, 16 November 2020</p>

8. **Report Appendices**

8.1 The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Existing text of Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution
- Appendix B: Proposed changes to Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution

9. **Background Papers**

None.

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