Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 22 July 2020

Subject	**Strategic Recovery Aims – Governance and Democratic arrangements.**
Purpose	To approve and endorse revised governance and democratic arrangements for the Covid-19 recovery period and endorse the proposed procedures for the conduct of remote meetings
Author	Head of Law and Regulation and Head of People and Business Change.
Ward	All
Summary	Cabinet meeting on 25th June agreed a number of Strategic Recovery Aims, which will underpin the corporate priorities as the Council moves into the recovery phase following the relaxation of the Covid-19 restrictions. This recognised that, for the immediate future, the "new normal" will require significant changes to the way in which services have been traditionally delivered and the Council's internal democratic and governance arrangements. Officers and elected Members will need to be able to discharge their duties safely and this will require a continuing need to work remotely in the longer term. Therefore, this report sets out proposals for the phased introduction of remote Council meetings, recommended protocols and procedures for the conduct and management of these meetings and a training and development programme for members to ensure that they are able to participate fully in these revised governance arrangements
Proposal	To approve and endorse revised governance and democratic arrangements for the Covid-19 recovery period and endorse the proposed procedures for the conduct of remote meetings.
Action by	Cabinet

Timetable

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Leader of the Council

Signed

Background

1. Cabinet meeting on 25th June agreed a number of Strategic Recovery Aims, which will underpin the corporate priorities as the Council moves into the recovery phase following the relaxation of the Covid-19 restrictions. This recognised that, for the immediate future, the "new normal" will require significant changes to the way in which services have been traditionally delivered and the Council's internal democratic and governance arrangements.

2. To deliver the Strategic Aims and to ensure that the Council complies with devolved Welsh Government and UK Government legislation, both officers and elected Members will need to be able to discharge their duties safely and this will require a continuing need to work remotely in the longer term.

3. Therefore, Cabinet agreed that a further report should be brought forward with proposals for the phased introduction of remote Council meetings, recommended protocols and procedures for the conduct and management of these meetings and a training and development programme for members to ensure that they are able to participate fully in these revised governance arrangements.

4. Following the introductions of the Covid-19 lock-down restrictions in March, all formal meetings of Cabinet, Council and Committees were suspended and all decisions have been taken under the officer and member scheme of delegation. Because the Council already operated an extensive scheme of delegated decision-making, both at an executive member and officer level, then it was not necessary to introduce any emergency measures to enable essential and urgent business to be conducted during this period. In terms of the democratic process, the requirement for "pre-decision scrutiny" of Cabinet Member reports has continued and all elected members have been consulted on all proposed executive decisions, the only slight variation being that comments have been submitted in writing. In addition, there has been an agreed communication process for the dissemination of information to elected members about Covid-related matters and an opportunity to submit urgent written questions in accordance with Council Standing Orders. Therefore, there has been no democratic deficit even during the suspension of all meetings during the lock-down period.

5. However, in the interests of openness and transparency it was always intended to re-introduce Council and committee meetings, with public access to the proceedings, as soon as the legal framework was introduced to permit meetings to be held remotely and as soon as the technology was available to support this.

6. The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations") came into force on 22nd April 2020 and apply to all Council meetings until 1st May 2021. The Regulations enable the Council to hold remote meetings to overcome Covid 19 social distancing measures and limitations in the existing Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 regarding the requirements for convening, managing and recording meetings.

7. The Regulations enable the Council to postpone holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM) until December 2020, enable current office-holders to remain office until May 2021 and suspend the automatic disqualification if Councillors do not attend meetings for more than 6 months. Therefore, the Council does not have to hold any remote meetings at all and the current scheme of delegation is sufficient to enable urgent decisions to continue to be taken without the need to convene any meetings.

8. However, the Regulations now permit all meetings to be held remotely, should the Council wish to adopt these governance arrangements. Although the Regulations enable Welsh Government

to issue statutory guidance on how remote meetings have been conducted, they have decided not to be prescriptive and to allow individual councils to decide how the meetings should be organised, provided that they comply with the requirements of the Regulations.

9. The most significant change introduced by the Regulations is to relax the legal requirements in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 regarding remote meetings and, in particular, the removal of the requirement that all members must be "seen and heard" at all times. In remote meetings up to 1st May 2021, the requirement is that members should only be able to speak and be heard by each other. This opens up a range of technology options for the conduct of remote meetings. Audio participation is all that is required, as a minimum and, therefore a recorded conference call would suffice, although applications such as Microsoft Teams also allow for visual participation. The Regulations also suspend the statutory requirement for public access to meetings where non-confidential items are being discussed, if this is not practicable, provided that a written record of the proceedings and decisions is published on the Council website within 5 days. However, the Welsh Local Government Association guidance recommends that, wherever possible, the press and public should be allowed to view live broadcasts of remote meetings where they would previously have been allowed access to attend the meetings.

10. Since the changes introduced by the Regulations, the Council's Governance and IT teams, supported by the SRS, have been testing a number of different technology applications and solutions for conducting remote meetings. In the longer term, developments to the current Public-i system which is used to live-stream meetings from the Chamber and integrates with the democratic services governance software, may provide greater functionality. However, the preferred solution for the interim period is Microsoft Teams, which is the supported application for internal meetings and which has been rolled-out to officers and members.

Phased Introduction of Remote meetings and Forward work programme.

11. The recommencement of formal Cabinet meetings as from 25th June was the first step to reinstalling governance and democratic arrangements through remote meetings. The previous Cabinet meeting was a closed session conducted remotely using MS Teams because of the relatively small number of participants. The meeting was recorded through the Teams facility in an MP4 format and the file has been converted to You-Tube and uploaded onto the Council's website for public access and viewing. The written minutes of the meeting have also been published on the Council's web site in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations. However, in the interests of openness and transparency future meetings will be broadcast live.

12. With larger numbers of participants and live streaming of the meeting, it will be necessary to use the MS Live Event application. This has different functionality compared with MS Teams but it can be adapted for remote Council meetings and is does have the capacity for the press and public to view the broadcast live in significant numbers, without affecting the quality of the band-width and connectivity for participants. However, management and organisation of the remote meetings is more complex and will require considerable support from the Governance and IT teams. The Governance Team Manager and the Democratic Services team will act as meeting organisers/producers and will activate the speaking and voting functions within the system, as well as supporting the Chair in managing the proceedings. Councillors and officers will be able to join the remote meetings as participants and can be seen and heard when their microphones and cameras are activated. The press and public will be able to access the live proceedings as attendees by clicking-on the meeting link published on the Council's web site, together with the agendas and reports. They can see and hear the proceedings, but they will not be able to participate.

13. The Cabinet meeting on 22nd July will be the first remote meeting to be broadcast live using this technology. Subject to successful implementation, it will then be used for all monthly Cabinet meetings as from September 2020. The technology will then be rolled-out for other remote Council meetings on a phased basis, according to the nature of the business to be conducted at the meetings and the implementation of a training and development programme for elected members to ensure that they are able to participate fully in the remote meetings. The quality of the decision-making and the democratic governance arrangements during this recovery period are dependent on both the reliability of the technology and the ability of elected members to use it effectively. Therefore, member training is a critical part of the implementation of these new governance arrangements.

14. A draft timetable for the phased introduction of remote meetings is attached at Appendix 1, together with an indication of the current forward work-programme. It is recommended that priority should be given to decision-making Committees, particularly where there are outstanding decisions that have not been taken under the scheme of delegation. The Scrutiny Committees can then be re-introduced, followed by the statutory Committees.

15. Although the Regulations removed the legal requirement for the Council to hold an Annual General Meeting in May 2020, there is a need to convene an AGM to deal with statutory appointments for the current municipal year. In particular, there is a requirement to appoint a new Mayor/Chair of Council, and the review the appointment of the Leader of the Council, Chairs of committees and outside bodies. Full Council will also need to ratify the recommendation from the Appointments Panel for the appointment of the permanent Chief Executive. Therefore, it is proposed that a full Council AGM should be held remotely, and broadcast live, on Tuesday 28th July 2020 but only for the purposes of making these statutory appointments. Any other non-urgent business will have to wait until the next scheduled Council meeting on 29th September.

16. During the August recess, preparations can then be made to re-commence Planning and Licensing Committee meetings as from September 2020. As both of these Committees involve public participation and speaking, it will be necessary to revise the rules of procedure and protocols for these meetings to enable them to be conducted remotely. Because they are also discharging decision-making functions of a quasi-judicial nature where rules of natural justice apply, then the arrangements will need to be adapted to allow for external participation and to ensure that only members who have been present throughout the remote meeting take part in the final decision.

17. The Scrutiny Committee meetings can re-commence in September/October followed by the statutory Committees – Democratic Services, Standards and Audit. Any advisory or non-statutory groups and meetings can be deferred until after November. The Regulations have removed the legal requirement for the statutory Committees to hold at least one meeting every year and, therefore, there is no requirement to hold any remote meetings until after May 2021. However, there are specific matters that need to be considered as part of the forward work programme, particularly in relation to Audit Committee and therefore it is recommended that these meetings should be held remotely at the appropriate time.

18. The phased introduction of remote meetings should not be seen as a return to "business as usual". As the Council moves into the recovery phase following the relaxation of the Covid-19 restrictions, the "new normal" will require significant changes to internal democratic and governance arrangements. This is not simply a change in the way that Council meetings are conducted but reflects a change in the priorities and work of those Committees. The strategic recovery aims have re-focused and re-prioritised corporate objectives and these will need to be reflected in the revised forward work programmes. In particular, discussions will need to take place during the August recess with Chairs of Scrutiny Committees to re-assess and re-evaluate

the forward work programme in the light of the strategic recovery aims, rather than simply revert to the previous programme.

19. Agenda management will also be essential to ensure that only urgent or relevant matters are reported to remote Committees for consideration. Where appropriate, decisions should continue to be made under the scheme of delegation. If the agendas for remote meetings and the forward work programme are filled-up with non-essential reports, then this will detract and deflect from strategic priorities during the recovery phase. The agendas for remote meetings need to be shorter and more focussed, to ensure the quality of debate and decision-making, as it is more difficult to maintain attention for long periods of time in a virtual/remote setting.

Member Training and development

20. Participation in remote meetings will also require a fundamental change in culture and, therefore, elected members will need to be fully trained and confident in using the technology in order to contribute effectively to the debate and decision-making. The role of the Chair will become even more important in managing the conduct of the remote meeting in a structured way. Therefore, additional training will be required for those members who Chair remote meetings, particularly their interaction with other members and officers and the use of electronic speaking and voting applications.

21. Because of the very short time available before the proposed full Council AGM on 28th July, then there will be limited opportunities to provide member training. Therefore, it is imperative that this meeting is just confined to the standard AGM business and other matters will have to wait until the September Council meeting, by which time more extensive training will have been delivered for members.

22. However, some basic training will clearly be required before this Council meeting. Therefore, Democratic Services staff will contact all Councillors in the week before the meeting to ensure that they have MS Team installed on their laptops/devices and they are able to activate the application. They will be sent a series of screenshots and instructions about what they need to do to join and participate in remote meetings, including the use of the "raised hand" facility to indicate a wish to speak and the voting application in the chat box. The Democratic Services officer will also schedule a series of one-hour live event training sessions during this week, which members will be able to join, to test the technology. The Chair of Council will be provided with a one-to-one training session in relation to how the AGM will need to be managed remotely. However, Democratic Services and IT support staff will be available at all times to offer support and guidance to any members who are having difficulty using the applications.

23. During the August recess, a more comprehensive programme of training and development will be implemented, tailored to the particular needs and roles of individual members and Committees. Bespoke training will need to be provided for Chairs of Committees and for Licensing and Planning members, in readiness for the commencement of these remote Committees in September/October.

Protocols and Procedures

24. The Regulations will apply regardless of anything contained in the Council's Constitution or Standing Orders and will override any incompatible provisions. Therefore, the Council does not need to formally amend its current Standing Orders to allow for these remote meetings to take place. However, it is recommended that a Protocol should be agreed for the conduct of remote meetings, to ensure fairness and consistency and to provide guidelines for participants regarding

procedures, etiquette and conduct. A suggested Protocol and Procedure is set out at <u>Appendix 2</u>, together with a summary of Tips for Elected members. If Cabinet is content with this Protocol then it is suggested that they recommend to Council that it be formally adopted as part of the Constitution, until 1st May 2021 or such earlier time at the Council may determine.

Financial Summary

25.   There are no specific financial implications, as the remote meetings will be delivered within existing resources.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to introduce remote meetings will have a reputational impact on the openness and transparency of the governance processes	Medium	Low	The current scheme of delegation and pre-decision Scrutiny ensures that decisions continue to be made lawfully but remote meetings will provide greater openness and transparency.	Head of Law & Regulation/Head of People and Business Change.
The processes and procedures for remote meetings do not operate effectively due to technology problems of lack of member training	High	Medium	Democratic Services and IT staff will support the systems and deliver appropriate training to members, to meet their needs.	Head of Law & Regulation/Head of People and Business Change
The organisation and management of remote meetings detracts from urgent work in responding to the Covic-19 emergency and delivering the recovery aims	High	Low	Agendas for remote meetings and forward work programmes will be revised and refocused in accordance with strategic recovery aims.	Head of Law & Regulation

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The proposed Governance and Democratic arrangements are consistent with the Council's Strategic Recovery aims and support the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22. The principles of open and transparent governance are also enshrined in the well-being plan and objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Options Available and considered

The options available to Cabinet:

1. To approve and endorse revised governance and democratic arrangements for the Covid-19 recovery period and endorse the proposed procedures for the conduct of remote meetings

2. To not approve and endorse revised governance and democratic arrangements.

Preferred Option and Why

Option 1 is preferred, as this will enable the Council to maintain open and transparent governance and democratic arrangements during the Covid-19 recovery period.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

Comments of Monitoring Officer

Set out in the Report

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

Local issues
None

Background Papers

The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Wales) Regulations 2020

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – PHASED INTRODUCTION OF REMOTE MEETINGS

Council meeting	Date of remote meeting	Reports
Cabinet	22nd July 2020 Teams Live Event	Transport Update Schools' Recovery Western Gateway Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24 Remote Meetings 2019/20 Revenue Outturn Capital Outturn and Additions Treasury Management Outturn
	16th September 2020 Teams Live Event	Capital Programme Monitor Revenue Budget Monitor WAO Annual Improvement Report Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report Corporate Risk Register Q1 Welsh Language Report
	October 2020 – March 2021 Monthly Cabinet meetings Teams Live Events	Outstanding reports deferred since April to be included in forward work programme: Pay and Reward Policy Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report Band B Capital Investment of Schools Local Toilets' Strategy WAO Report re: Anti-Social Behaviour Destination Management Plan Corporate Risk Register Q4 Risk Management Strategy

		Forecast numbers of LAC LDP Annual Monitoring report
Council	28th July 2020 Teams Live Event	Annual General Meeting Appointment of Mayor/Chair of Council Appointment of Chair of Cabinet/Leader Other Appointments
	29th September 2020 Teams Live Event	NNDR Rate Relief Scheme Pay and Reward Policy Treasury Management Year End Report Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24 LDP Annual Monitoring Report
	October 2020- March 2020 Six weekly meetings Teams Live Event	Forward work programme
Regulatory Committees Planning	Monthly meetings as from September 2020 Teams Live Events with public speaking Planning Protocol to be amended to facilitate remote public participation	Determination of planning applications that have not been taken under delegated powers
Licensing	Licensing panel hearings as required Private hearings can be conducted using MS Teams Hearings procedures to be amended to allow remote participation by applicants, objectors and interested parties	To determine licensing matters that have not been determined under delegated power and to conduct remote hearings
	Licensing Committee – from September 2020 Teams Live Event	Licensing Act 2003 Consultation Report
Overview and Scrutiny Committees Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee	Re-commence scheduled meetings September- October 2020 Teams Live Events	Forward work programmes to be reviewed with Chairs Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024

PSC – Partnerships		Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report Regional Safeguarding Well-being Plan Mid –Year Update
PSC – Place and Corporate		To be agreed
PSC – People		To be agreed
Statutory Committees	Re-commence quarterly meetings from October 2020 Teams Live events	
Audit Committee		Annual Audit for 2019/20 Audit Plan for 2020/21
Standards Committee		As per work programme
Democratic Services Committee		As per work programme
SACRE	Re-commence meetings from October 2020 MS Teams	To be agreed. Written comments will be agreed in response to the Welsh Government consultation on the New Curriculum: Religion, values and ethics An informal Q&A session has been arranged via Microsoft Teams
Other non-statutory, advisory or liaison meetings	To be re-introduced on a phased basis, as required, as from November 2020	

Remote Meetings Protocol

Microsoft Teams and Live Event

1.   Introduction

1.1   The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations") came into force on 22nd April 2020 and will apply to all Council meetings until 1st May 2021. The Regulations provide the flexibility the Council to hold remote meetings, to overcome the restrictions of the Covid-19 lock-down, and to enable urgent business to be transacted in the meantime. They relax some of the limitations in the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 regarding the statutory requirements for convening, managing and recording meetings.

1.2   Remote attendance at meetings by members is permitted, provided that certain conditions are satisfied. The Regulations remove the requirement in the Measure that all members must be "seen and heard" at all times. In remote meetings up to 1st May 2021, the requirement is that members should be able to speak and be heard by each other. The requirement for public access to remote meetings is also removed. Therefore, audio participation in a closed meeting is sufficient to comply, but a visual, live solution is clearly preferable.

1.3   The Regulations enable the Council to hold meetings without all, or any, of the members being physically present in a room. This allows for remote meetings through electronic, digital, virtual locations, live webcast, live interactive streaming, video and telephone conferencing. The 'place' at which the meeting is held may be a Council building, or where the organiser of the meeting is located, or an electronic, digital or virtual location, a web address, or a conference call telephone number.

1.4   In order for members to be able to attend meetings of the Council remotely, they need not be physically present, provided they are able to hear and be heard (and, where possible, see and be seen) by other Councillors, participants and members of the public viewing remotely.

2.   Application of this Protocol

2.1   The Regulations will apply regardless of anything contained in the Council's Constitution or Standing Orders and will override any incompatible provisions. However, the Council can make its own Standing Orders and Protocols for the conduct of remote meetings.

2.2   Therefore, this Protocol will apply to all remote meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees, and sub-committees that are held up to 1st May 2021 or such earlier date as may be agreed by the Council. Any provisions in Council Standing Orders or any other parts of the Constitution shall be read subject to this Protocol and shall take effect as if varied or dis-applied by this Protocol. In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between anything in this Protocol and any rules of procedure in the Constitution, then the provisions of this Protocol shall take precedence insofar as they relate to remote meetings.

2.3   However, except as may be varied or dis-applied by the terms of this Protocol, then all other relevant provisions of Council Standing Orders, and other rules of procedure set out in the Constitution shall continue to apply to all remote meetings.

2.4   Where a member has a right to attend any meeting in accordance with any statutory or common law right or under the terms of the Council's Constitution, then that right is to be interpreted as a right to attend by remote access.

3.   Microsoft Teams

MS Teams is the supported and secure application which is recommended for hosting remote / virtual meetings. It has functionality for audio, video, and screen sharing and you do not need to be a member of an organisation (or have a Teams account) to join a Teams meeting. For smaller closed meetings, the MS Teams meeting application can be used. However, for larger numbers of participants and live broadcasting of public meetings, the MS Live Event facility will be utilised.

4.   Access to documents

4.1   Democratic Services will publish the agenda and reports for meetings on the Council's website at least 3 clear working days before the date of the meeting and will notify Councillors by email in line with usual practice. Paper copies of agendas will not made available to members. The Regulations provide for electronic publication of agendas, reports and minutes and do not require printed copies of documents to be made available. However, the Chair can be provided with hard copies of meeting papers, if required, to assist with the management of proceedings.

4.2   It is recommended that Members **use their Council laptops** for participating in remote meetings and any tablets or smart phones are used to open the agenda and documents. This will assist with any technical support that may be required.

5.   Setting up the Meeting

The Governance Team in Democratic Services will be responsible for organising the remote/virtual meetings. They will send a meeting request via Microsoft Teams/Live Events to all members and other participants, which will also appear in Outlook calendars. This enables them to be the `organiser/producer' of the remote meeting and gives them more functionality in terms of controlling the proceedings and any live broadcast, in order to support the Chair.

6.   External participants

6.1   All Members and Council staff have Microsoft Teams installed on their laptop/device linked to their email account and therefore they can join a remote meeting using this application.

6.2   External participants can also use the Teams application, by downloading it to their laptop, smartphone or tablet. They can be sent the meeting request vie email and if a participant is included in this way, they can use all the functions of Teams (video / chat) in the meeting. This can be used for external presenters at Committee meetings or where public speaking is allowed (for example, Planning Committee). Alternatively, the Democratic Services Officer can add an external participant in part of a meeting as a voice call at the appropriate time. There is also provision for a conference call number and ID to be given to external participants, to enable them to join the meeting. Again, this will be arranged by the Governance Team as part of the meeting organisation/production.

6.3   The Protocols and Procedures for Planning Committee and Licensing hearings should also be read as if varied or dis-applied by the provisions of this Protocol and in the case of any conflict or inconsistency then terms of this Protocol shall take precedence insofar as they relate to remote meetings and hearings.

6.4   Private hearings of Licensing panels, where the press and public are excluded, may be held remotely using MS Teams and a simplified process can be followed for speaking and voting, without the need to use the chat box.

6.5   Where external participants have the right to speak at Planning Committee but they do not have access to the technology to dial-in remotely, they may to attend the Council offices in order to participate in the virtual meeting if they are able to do so safely. External participants may also be required to participate from Council offices if this is considered necessary for the efficient conduct of the meeting, to ensure that they speak and leave the meeting at the appropriate time. A pre-recorded speech may also be used, where appropriate.

7.   Joining the Meeting

7.1   Councillors are encouraged to join the meeting promptly (i.e. at least 10 minutes before the scheduled start time) in order to avoid disrupting the meeting. Attendees should use the link within the calendar invite for the meeting which will say `**Join Microsoft Teams Meeting'**, which will open the Microsoft Teams application on the laptop/tablet automatically. Any member having technical issues opening the link or joining the meeting should e-mail or call the meeting organiser/presenter.

7.2   Prior to participating in any remote Council meetings, all members and officers should activate the corporate background to avoid unnecessary distractions or inappropriate images being shown on the screen. The Governance Team will send the corporate image to all participants, with instructions as to how the picture can be saved and opened as the background image within MS Teams.

7.3   Members should ensure that they **click on the chat icon** in the tool bar at the bottom of the screen as they will need this to indicate to the Chair that this wish to speak or cast their vote in relation to any item on the agenda. If this is not activated then they will not be able to fully participate in the meeting. The chat facility will appear on the right hand side of the screen and will be visible to all the other participants in the meeting, but not to the public.

7.4   Participants should also ensure that, where confidential matters are being discussed remotely, no other person can hear the audio broadcast. The relevant provisions of the officer and member Codes of Conduct regarding the disclosure of confidential information will apply at all times to remote meetings. Where other people may be present in the room, then the use of headphones or earphones may be appropriate.

8.   Starting the Meeting

8.1   At the start of the meeting, the Governance Officer will check that all required participants are present. However, with live broadcasts, meetings will need to commence at the designated time and will not be delayed until everyone has joined. Members will be able to join the meeting later, and this will count for attendance purposes, but where Committees are acting in some form of quasi- judicial capacity and rules of natural justice apply, then members cannot participate in any debate or decision if they have not been present throughout that item.

8.2   The Democratic Services team will also have details of any members of the public or external participants who have been invited to participate. They will be sent an invitation to join the meeting with the appropriate appointment, link or dialling code.

8.3   With Live Events broadcasts, the press and public will be able to access the meeting by clicking-on the link published on the Council's website. They will join the Live Event and "Attendees" and will be able to see and hear the live debate but they will not be able to participate.

8.4   The Chair will ask all Members and Officers to **turn off and mute all unnecessary microphones**, unless they are speaking. This prevents background noise, which is intrusive and disruptive during the meeting, and also saves bandwidth and connectivity. The Governance

Officer will also monitor this and will be able to mute microphones when they are not in use. Participants are reminded **to turn their microphones back on when they are invited to speak**. The Governance Officer cannot un-mute microphones.

8.5   The Chair will also ask all participants to **turn off all unnecessary cameras.** This helps to maintain bandwidth and call quality and avoids anyone being filmed/recorded without realising. The Chair should keep their camera on at all times. There is no facility for the Governance Officer to turn off other participants cameras (unlike muting microphones), although they are able to change the live display.

8.6   The Chair will also remind members to **activate the chat box** for the purposes of speaking and voting.

9.   Management of Proceedings

9.1   The Democratic Services team will act as meeting organisers/presenters and will support the Chair in managing the remote meetings. They will be responsible for managing the live-stream broadcast and will operate the cameras to display the speakers on the screen. They will ensure that the chat box facility is activated for participants to indicate their wish to speak and will operate the electronic poll for voting.

9.2   At the direction of the Chair, the Governance Team may pause or adjourn the meeting by taking down the live stream or live-feed from public viewing and may mute any speaker at any time.

9.3   The Governance Team shall also allocate different levels of access to people logging-in (based on whether they are the Chair, a Councillor, officer, participant or a member of the public with viewing access.

10.   Attendance

10.1   Participation in any remote meeting will count as an official "attendance" for the purposes of the 6 months' rule under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972

10.2   The Regulations suspend the operation of the automatic disqualification for 6 months non-attendance at meetings, as from 22nd April 2020. The Council is not required to grant any special dispensations during the suspension period, while no meetings have been held, as this time does not count towards the 6 months. However, when virtual meetings are held under this Protocol and a Councillor is invited to participate remotely, then time will start to run again for the purposes of his/her 6 months. Non-participation in any remote meeting is treated as a non-attendance for the purposes of Section 85.

10.3   Participation in any remote meeting is automatically recorded in the participants list in Teams and the attendance of members will be formally recorded in the published minutes.

10.4   Apologies for absence should be sent to the Governance Team in advice of the remote meeting. The Chair will be provided with the list of apologies received and will announce the names of the members who have sent their apologies at the start of the meeting. Any additional apologies should be written in the chat box for Democratic Services to record in the minutes rather than announced verbally, to avoid unnecessary disruption.

11.   Speaking

11.1   The order of speaking and the time limits for speeches and questions shall be as set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

11.2   No person shall speak until invited to do so by the Chair and shall cease to speak when instructed to do so by the Chair.

11.3   When a Member is speaking, no other Member shall interrupt or seek to speak over that Member. If a Member interrupts or speaks over another Member then the Chair will warn that Member about their conduct. If the Member concerned persists in interrupting the speaker then the Chair may move that the Member shall not be heard further. If the Member continues to interrupt after such a motion is carried, the Chair may move that either the Member leaves the meeting, or that the meeting is adjourned.

11.4   When the Chair opens up a matter for debate or question, Members should indicate their wish to speak by using the chat facility. At the beginning of each agenda item, the Governance Officer will activate the "Raise Hand" application within the chat facility. Members should click on the raised hand icon in the chat box and their name will appear in the list of speakers. The Chair will invite Members to speak in the strict order that their names appear in the list.

11.5   If a Member wishes to raise an urgent point of order, personal explanation or closure motion, then a message should be written in the chat facility, to request that the Chair allow the Member to speak out of turn. However, this should only be raised in exceptional circumstances and Members should generally await their turn to speak so as not to interrupt the flow of the meeting and to enable Democratic Services staff to line up the next speaker for the live broadcast.

11.6   The messaging function in the chat window should only be used for communicating and interacting with the Chair. Members should not use the chat box to communicate with each another as this function needs to be kept clear to allow the Chair to manage the meeting effectively. Any messages posted in the chat window will be available for all participants to read.

12.   Meeting Etiquette

All participants in the remote meeting should comply with the etiquette at all times:-

(a) Join the meeting promptly to avoid any unnecessary interruptions

(b) Mute your microphone when you are not talking.

(c) Switch off your camera if you are not speaking.

(d) Indicate a wish to speak by using the chat function

(e) Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair

(f) Speak clearly (and if you are not using video then please state your name)

(g) If referring to a specific page or slide, mention the page or slide number

(h) Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.

13.   Voting

13.1   **Majority**

Any matter will be decided by a simple majority of votes cast by those Members voting and in remote attendance at the time when the question was put. Where Committees are acting in some form of quasi- judicial capacity and rules of natural justice apply, then members cannot vote or participate in any decision if they have not been a remote participant throughout that item. In the case of an equality of votes, then the Chair will have a second and casting vote.

13.2   **Method of voting**

When a motion has been put to the vote, the Democratic Services officer will enable the Polling application in the chat box. Members must ensure that they have the chat functionality enabled and open on the right hand side of the screen in order to cast their votes. A voting survey will appear in the chat box on the right hand side of the screen and with options to indicate whether a member wished to vote For, Against or Abstain. Members should click on the circle alongside the option that they wish to vote for, followed by the "Submit Vote" box underneath it.

13.3   If a Member makes a mistake when voting, they can click the correct option and submit the vote again and it will override the original vote option submitted. The Chair will allow sufficient time for members to cast their votes correctly.

13.4   The Poll will update in real time. The votes will be automatically counted as they are submitted and are visible to all participants in the meeting. Electronic votes are recorded on the system but individual votes are not identified on the screen and the chat room Poll is not available on the live stream for public viewing.

13.5   The Chair will declare the numbers of votes cast and whether the motion has been carried or lost once there is a clear majority. This process will be repeated for every agenda item that requires a vote.

13.6   If the Polling function fails or any voting Member is unable to cast their vote, they can submit their vote in writing by adding it to the chat and it will be counted with the other votes already cast.

13.7   If a recorded vote is requested, the Chair will ask each Member in alphabetical order to state whether they wish to vote for or against the motions or whether they wish to abstain. The votes will then be counted and recorded. At the conclusion of the voting, the Chair will declare the numbers of votes cast and whether the motion has been carried or lost.

14.   Confidential and Exempt Information

14.1   If a motion is passed to exclude the press and public from a remote meeting while confidential or exempt information is being discussed (as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) under Part 2 of the agenda, then the right of the press and public to see and hear the meeting shall cease and the Democratic Services officer will immediately disconnect the livestream broadcast and their remote access. The access rights of any external participants in the meeting will also be removed.

14.2   Members (and any officers who remain as participants in the Part 2 meeting) should ensure that no other person is able to see or hear the confidential discussion from their laptop/device. Any such disclosure of confidential information would be a breach of the Officer or Members Code of Conduct.

15.   Quorum

The number of Councillors required to be present for a quorum at any remote meeting shall be as set out in the Constitution. For the purposes of determining whether a quorum of Councillors is present at any remote meeting, the Chair shall include all those members in remote attendance at any one time. If at any time during the remote meeting, the participation list shows that there is no longer a quorum of participating Members, the Chair shall immediately adjourn the meeting. The remaining business shall be considered at a future meeting to be convened on a date and time to be agreed by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and the Leader.

16.   Declaration of Interests

16.1   If a member has any pecuniary or personal interest in any matter under discussion at the remote meeting then that interest should be declared as soon as possible by notifying the Chair through

the chat facility. The Chair will then invite the member to speak and declare the nature of the interest, which will be recorded in the written minutes.

16.2   Where the personal interest is a pecuniary or prejudicial interest and the Member is required to leave the meeting during the discussion of the item, the Member shall immediately disconnect their remote access by clicking the Leave button or clicking the red square with the white telephone in the toolbar. The Member should not re-join the meeting until notified by the Democratic Services officer that the item has been concluded. The Chair should check that the Member has left and re-joined the meeting at the appropriate time by clicking on the 'show participants' button in the toolbar next to the chat icon.

16.3   Wherever possible, Members should notify the Monitoring Officer or the Democratic Services Manager at least 2 working days in advance of the remote meeting whether they have any personal or pecuniary interest to declare.

16.4   The Democratic Services officers will e-mail the declaration of interest form to members for completion and return following the meeting. This will be added to the electronic register of members' interests.

17.   Interpretation of this Protocol and Standing Orders

Where the Chair is required to interpret Standing Orders and the provisions of this Protocol for remote participation, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to making a ruling. However, the Chair's decision shall be final.

18.   Disorderly Conduct by Members

18.1   In accordance with Standing Orders, if any Member persistently disregards the ruling of the Chair by behaving improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs the business of the remote meeting, the Chair may move that the Member shall not be heard further.

18.2   If the Member continues to behave improperly after such a motion is carried, the Chair may move that either the Member leaves the remote meeting, or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

19.   Technical issues.

19.1   In the event that the Chair or Democratic Services Officer identifies a failure of the remote participation facility, the Chair should declare an adjournment while the fault is addressed.

19.2   If it is not possible to address the fault and the meeting becomes inquorate because of this fault, the meeting will be abandoned until such time as it can be reconvened on a date and time to be agreed by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and the Leader. If the meeting is quorate, then it will continue.

19.3   There is no facility for pausing and restarting the live stream. Therefore, during any adjournment, participants should switch off their microphones and cameras. The Chair will confirm the time for recommencing the meeting and all participants will need to re-join the meeting at the restart time.

19.4   If the meeting was due to determine an urgent matter and it has not been possible to continue because of technical difficulties, the decision shall be taken in accordance with the urgent scheme of Cabinet Member or Head of Service delegation, if it cannot await a further re-convened remote meeting.

20.   Access to information

20.1   The requirement to ensure meetings are open to the public includes access by remote means, including video conferencing, live webcast and live interactive streaming. Where a meeting is accessible to the public through such remote means, the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.

20.2   Any requirements for the authority to ensure publication, posting or making available a document for inspection at offices of the council include publication on the Council's website.

20.3   As soon as possible after the conclusion of the remote meeting, the draft minutes and the live Teams recording of the meeting will be uploaded onto the Council website for public access and information.

TIPS FOR COUNCILLORS

Joining a remote meeting in Teams

- **Step 1** You will receive an email that is a calendar appointment from Democratic Services. You should accept or decline this appointment depending on your attendance.

- **Step 2** You will need to click the link within the outlook calendar, or within the calendar in Teams to Join the meeting.

- **Step 3** This is a hold screen to test your camera and microphone. Turn everything on and adjust as necessary. If you cannot see or hear anything, use the cog to try different settings.

- **Step 4** Once happy with settings, mute your microphone and click Join Now. This will take you into the meeting with everyone else.

- **Step 5** Click the chat icon to make sure the chat function is visible down the right hand side of the screen. Use this to indicate to the chair you wish to speak or to vote on a particular item

- **Step 6** Once the meeting has finished, click the red square with the white telephone icon to leave the meeting.

DO

- **Active the corporate background under the settings, this will prevent anything in your background being visible.**

- **Be aware of the tools and functionality. You do not want to be talking away for a couple of minutes only to have your microphone muted and no one can hear you.**

- **If your internet connection is poor, consider turning off the incoming video under settings. This will reduce the amount of network needed to participate.**

- **Switch off your camera and microphone from the outset of the meeting. You need to turn your camera off for the live stream to work effectively, failure to do so means the public will not be able to see participants speaking. Muting microphone prevents any unnecessary noises being heard on the live stream.**

- **Remember to use the chat facility to indicate to the chair when you want to speak.**

- **Unmute your microphone and turn on your camera when you are invited to speak otherwise others will not be able to hear or see you.**

- **Consider using headphones to listen to the meeting. The audio through headphones will be clearer that the sound coming through your surface pro and will also ensure there is no feedback between the microphone and the speakers.**

- **Try and keep your device still and on a hard surface. If you are holding it or it is on your lap, every movement you make will come across on the image you project to everyone.**

- **If you find your picture is dark on the screen, try turning on the room lights or have a lamp on to the side of you.**

- **Think about your surroundings and be aware of what is being discussed. For example, if you are discussing an exempt item, you should make sure no one else is in the room with you and able to see or hear the content of the meeting.**

DO NOT

- **Use the chat functionality for anything other than voting and interacting with the Chair.**

- **Leave your camera and microphone on unless you are speaking. Everyone will be able to hear everything you say throughout the meeting unless your microphone is muted.**

- **Be tempted to dress down just because you are taking part remotely. Think about how you look on the stream and how this will be portrayed on the live stream to the public. It will still be a public meeting of the Council like any other.**

- **Wait until the meeting time to log in and set up. Test everything in advance, try calling other people to make sure you can hear and be heard.**

- **Stay in the meeting for any longer than is required and make sure you leave the meeting properly. If not, people will still be able to see and hear you. At the end of the meeting, turn off your microphone AND camera to minimise the risk of people hearing things you don't want them to!**