

## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY PROCEDURES**

**Subject: Public Participation at Physical Full Council and Planning Committee meetings**

**Brief Statement of Subject Matter:**

The following urgent decision is required to facilitate the continued functioning of Council business during the continuing Covid-19 outbreak.

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which permitted Committee meetings to be held remotely, does not apply to meetings on or after 7 May 2021.

Local authority Committee meetings, including Full Council meetings, will now take place physically, with the public and most officers able to attend virtually. Whilst the public must be provided with an opportunity to attend a meeting in person if they wish to do so, subject to the availability of space to accommodate the public in compliance with social distancing requirements, many members of the public will not feel comfortable participating in person. This urgent decision therefore provides the public with the flexibility to be able to choose to participate remotely. It also enables members of the public who are not comfortable attending in person and who have a poor or no internet connection, to participate through submitting a written statement, submitted in advance, to be read out on their behalf at a Committee meeting.

The Annual Council meeting, due to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021, will have restricted business, in line with Government guidance, to help reduce the risks of spreading Covid-19. It is proposed therefore that there should be no public speaking at this meeting. The Council procedure rules at Appendix 1 have been updated to reflect this request, though Members should not that this will not be a permanent change to the Council Procedure Rules but will instead only apply to the Annual Council meeting in May 2021.

There is a risk that if the public are only permitted to speak verbally during public participation at a physical meeting, as currently stipulated in the Council Procedure Rules and Planning Procedure rules, this could prevent participation by members of the public due to the limited number (of members of the public) that will be allowed to attend physical meetings due to Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Whilst action will be taken to try to mitigate risks, residents who choose to attend meetings in person should be aware that they will do so at their own risk.

The amended procedure rules can be found at appendices 1 and 2.

**Decision: To amend the public speaking rules for meetings of full Council and the Planning Committee to allow remote attendance by the public.**

**Date: May 2021**

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) For Full Council meetings as from 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the attached Council Procedure Rules, amended in respect of Public Participation at Council Meetings, should apply;**

- 2) For Planning Committee meetings from 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the attached Planning Committee procedure rules, amended in respect of Public Participation at Council Meetings, should apply; and
- 3) There should be no public speaking at the Annual Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**Grounds for Urgency:**

This decision is required urgently due to the forthcoming meetings of the Council taking place **physically** as from 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak.

**DECISION APPROVED BY:**

..... Chief Executive – K Dicks	..... Dated
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..... Section 151 Officer - J. Howse	..... Dated
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..... Monitoring Officer – C Felton	..... Dated
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..... Leader – K May	..... Dated
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..... Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny Board C Hotham	..... Dated
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..... Chairman - R Laight	..... Dated
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