

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT FORMAL MEETINGS WHERE THERE ARE PUBLIC SPEAKING RIGHTS

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SUBJECT MATTER:

The following urgent decision is required to facilitate the continued functioning of Council business during the 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 Councils to hold Committee meetings remotely, will not apply to Committee meetings held on or after 7 May 2021.

This urgent decision relates to the Committees where members of the public are currently afforded the ability under the Constitution to take part in meetings by way of making a statement and/or asking a question.

Specifically those committees are: -

- Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
- Council
- Planning Committee
- Parent Licensing Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Once the flexibility regulations come to an end, meetings of the above committees will have to take place physically with the option for Officers and the public to attend virtually. Public interest in the work of these committees, which have been accessible to the public virtually since May 2020, remains. However, there is a risk that if the public are only permitted to speak verbally during a physical meeting, as was the case prior to the Covid 19 outbreak, this could prevent participation by members of the public. This is because only a very limited number (of members of the public) will be allowed to attend physical meetings in person due to the Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. There may also be members of the public who would wish to participate in meetings but would be reluctant to do so due to health concerns or other considerations if required to do so only in person.

Therefore, it is proposed that for the Committees listed above, the relevant committee procedure rules should be updated to enable members of the public to be able to participate in physical Committee meetings either by attending the physical meeting and speaking, or by attending the meeting virtually to speak or, for those who have poor broadband or no internet connection, by submitting a written statement in advance for the consideration of the Committee to be read out by an officer.

The current deadline for members of the public to register to speak at meetings of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, Parent Licensing Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee is 12 noon on the day of the meeting. It is suggested that this deadline should be brought forward for all of these Committees slightly to provide time for tests to be held in advance of a Committee meeting on Microsoft Teams with residents wishing to speak at a meeting remotely. This would also correspond with the temporary public speaking rules that were introduced for virtual meetings of the Planning Committee during the Covid-19 pandemic, which have worked well in enabling Members of the public to participate remotely in meetings and it is proposed in the amended procedure rules that these timeframes for registering to speak at meetings of the Planning Committee should continue to apply when the Council returns to meetings in person.

The decision invites Members to approve the attached documents showing the amendments to the rules for each Committee.

Attachments:

- i. Planning Committee Procedure Rules – updated version May 2021
- ii. Extract from Council Procedure Rules re Public Speaking
- iii. Extract from Licensing Code of Practice - re Public Speaking
- iv. Extract from Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules re Public Speaking
- v. Extract from the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee’s rules re Public Speaking

DECISION:

With effect from 7th May 2021 for meetings of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, Council, Planning Committee, Parent Licensing Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the attached amended Procedure Rules should apply.

(Council decision)

GROUNDS FOR URGENCY:

This decision is required urgently in relation to the forthcoming Committee meetings due to take place from May 2021 onwards, and to allow the essential business of the Council at the meetings of all five Committees listed to take place going forward. This decision is being taken in the context of the continuing restrictions and rules around social distancing that have been applied by central government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

DECISION APPROVED BY:

(Deputy) **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FINANCE & RESOURCES
(if financial implications)

.....
(Signature) (Sue Hanley / Kevin Dicks - (D)CX)

.....
(Signature) (James Howse)

Date: May 2021

PROPOSED ACTION SUPPORTED *(amend as appropriate)*

..... (Signature) (Signature) (Signature) (Signature) (Signature)
<i>(Block Capitals)</i>	<i>(Block Capitals)</i>	<i>(Block Capitals)</i>	<i>(Block Capitals)</i>	<i>(Block Capitals)</i>
MAYOR *	PF HOLDER	LEADER / LABOUR Group	LEADER / LDR CONSERVATIVE Group	CHAIR O&S Committee
Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:

Notes:

* In addition to the Executive decision above regarding the matter under consideration, the Mayor is signing to agree both that the Executive decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. This is to ensure that the call-in procedures as set out in Part 8 of the Constitution shall not apply where an Executive decision being taken is urgent.