

Information relating to Area Committee meetings

Council agreed on 27 May 2021:

“That Area Committees continue to be run virtually up to 31 December 2021 initially, with a review by Civic Affairs Committee in the autumn on a more permanent change and to request that the Monitoring Officer make necessary immediate amendments to the Council’s Constitution to give effect to this change.”

As Councillors will be aware, the Government did not extend the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 beyond 7 May 2021 to enable councillor decision making to take place virtually.

Area Committees, by being virtual and not in person, will therefore not be able to make any decisions either independently or that have been delegated by the Executive (eg area committee grants-which are not scheduled to be considered until spring 2022).

Civic Affairs Committee will consider the pros and cons of continuing with virtual Area Committees in the autumn. At Council on 27 May, Members asked that other considerations are also included in the review (eg the boundaries of the current Area Committees, the format). Councillors views will be canvassed as part of the review.

The Constitution needs to be amended to reflect that Area Committees will be non-decision making **for as long as they are held virtually.**

The changes to the Constitution are as follows:

Article 8

8.2.5 Area committees have these principal purposes:

- ~~To make decisions concerning executive and regulatory functions of the Council which have been delegated to them;~~

Deleted as Area Committees cannot make decisions whilst being held virtually.

Part 3 Section 11

This section describes the Council functions for which area committees are to be responsible for.

This will not apply in so far as Area Committees operating as virtual meetings cannot be decision making. Area Committees can advise and decisions will be taken subsequently by the relevant person or body empowered to do so taking into account the views of the Area Committee.

Part 4EE:Area Committee Procedure Rules

- 6.1 An area committee shall, at its first meeting of the municipal year, elect City Councillors as Chair and Vice-Chair and shall be responsible for filling any vacancy.

This procedure rule will not apply whilst Area Committees are virtual.

Appointing a Chair and Vice-Chair

Part 4EE 6.1 makes it clear that Chairs and Vice Chairs are appointed at the first Area Committee of the new Municipal Year

However this presents a difficulty in how a Chair/Vice Chair is agreed upon as the area committees, by being virtual, cannot make any decisions, and this includes the election of a Chair and Vice Chair.

Although the meetings at least until 31 December will be non-decision making, it is still desirable to have a named Councillor co-ordinating matters in between meetings amongst both Councillors and Officers and to co-ordinate the discussion at the meetings themselves.

Officers will report to the meeting how a Chair/Vice Chair can be agreed upon.

County Councillors present at Area Committee

Members are reminded that County Councillors are co-opted to the area committee where the clear majority of the County Council Division is within the area committee. [When making decisions as an Area Committee County Councillors may vote on all matters except for any decision relating to city council funding and the election of the Chair and Vice Chair].

Note-some county councillors have chosen to also attend area committees where less than the majority of a Division is in that area.