

Report on	Council Governance Arrangements During COVID 19
Date of Meeting	Thursday 23 April 2020
Reporting Officer	Chief Executive
Contact Officer	Chief Executive

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek members' approval to recommence committee meetings in June 2020.
1.2	To seek delegated authority in respect of the format of committee and council meetings in June 2020.
2.0	Background
2.1	At its meeting in March 2020, the Council took a decision to suspend committee meetings until further notice due to the coronavirus outbreak.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Council meeting schedule for June 2020 to June 2021 was considered by P&R in March 2020 and ratified at the subsequent Council meeting. The following dates pertain to the month of June 2020. Monday 1 st - AGM Tuesday 2 nd – Planning Thursday 4 th – P&R Tuesday 9 th – Environment Thursday 11 th – Development Committee Tuesday 16 th – Audit Committee Thursday 25 th – Council Meeting
3.2	Members may be aware that the Coronavirus Act 2020 gave the NI Assembly the power to make regulations altering how meetings of the Council and its committees are held. This would include provisions relating to the manner in which Members would attend, speak at, vote in or otherwise participate in meetings.
3.3	While the regulations are currently being drafted it is unlikely that they will come into force until mid-May 2020.

3.4	Given the current status of council services it is considered that the suspension of committee meetings should continue during May. However, in order to facilitate the recovery phase, it is proposed that committee meetings should return in June 2020 in line with the dates at section 3.1.
3.5	<p>By that time, the Council is likely to have the following options for holding these committee meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. “virtually” with members joining via remote access with full speaking and voting rights b. a reduced number in the chamber eg 50% of normal political strength (rounded up to nearest whole number) and other members joining via remote access with full speaking and voting rights c. full attendance should social distancing rules be relaxed by then.
3.6	Where options a or b to be invoked, remote access for some members may need to be facilitated in another council building should their home broadband be insufficient for remote access.
3.7	There are particular issues surrounding the operation of planning committee, where objectors and applicants or their representatives have the right to address the committee. It is considered that this could be facilitated easier through physical presence rather than virtually.
3.8	Access to committee meetings by members of the public could be facilitated by remote access.
3.9	It is unclear if the regulations will be made in time to allow a “virtual” council meeting in May 2020 but it is expected that they will be in place in time for the AGM on 1 st June 2020.
3.10	Any decision on the manner in which to hold future committee and council meetings will be informed by the latest advice and guidance on the coronavirus.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: N/A</p> <p>Human: N/A</p> <p>Risk Management:</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A</p>

	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members' approval is sought to recommence committee meetings in June 2020 as per original dates.
5.2	The Chief Executive, guided by input from Party Leaders and Independents, informed by the latest advice and guidance on the coronavirus, is delegated authority to determine the format in which June committees, the AGM and the monthly council meeting will be held.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	N/A