

Report on	Standing Orders for Council - Amendment
Date of Meeting	Thursday 25 th July 2024
Reporting Officer	Adrian McCreesh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer	J McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services & Engagement

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 consider an amendment to the Standing Orders of Council following the passing of the <i>Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024</i> by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 24 th June 2024, providing Councils with the option to transact council and committee business by remote/hybrid means should it opt to do so.
1.2	In line with standing order 30.2 concerning any amendments to our Standing Orders, discussion on the amendments as noted within section 3.0 now stands adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of Mid Ulster District Council. It states: <i>“Any motion to, add to, vary or revoke these Standing Orders will, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council. The mandatory standing orders may not be added to, varied or revoked by the Council.”</i>
1.3	The next ordinary meeting of Council will take place on Thursday 26 th September, at which the proposed amendments as detailed can be discussed, and subject to their agreement by Members be enacted thereafter.
2.0	Background
	<u>Requirement for Amendment(s)</u>
2.1	From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic Council had been transacting its council and committee meeting business by virtual means by convening hybrid meetings initially over Webex before migrating to using Zoom. Hybrid meetings whereby some members attended in person and others virtually, initially to comply with social distancing requirements, were undertaken under section 78 (local authority meetings) of the coronavirus Act 2020 and subordinate legislation passed by the NI Assembly which came into operation on 1st May 2020.

2.2.	Extension Orders to this provision were made on a number of occasions but came to an end on 6th March 2024. With the ability for Councils to transact its business by remote/virtual means having ceased such meetings stopped in March 2024. All meetings are now in-person only.
2.3	The <i>Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024</i> have been enacted and these Regulations allow Council to transact their business by virtual/remote means, extending to hybrid meetings. Council at its meeting of Thursday 27 th June opted to transact all future council and committee meetings by way of hybrid means, whereby the meetings would be streamed and chaired from a council chamber but Members (and members of the public) would have the option to join virtually should they wish to do so.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Following Council decision of the <i>Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024</i> to opt to transact future Council and Committee meetings by hybrid means forming part of our Standing Orders, the amendments as noted be incorporated.
3.2	<p><u>New Standing Order(s) specific to Hybrid Meetings</u></p> <p>The following is being proposed as the wording of a new Standing Order (no.32):-</p> <p>32 Remote Council Meetings</p> <p>The Council has decided that council meetings are to be held remotely, either wholly or partly. Any reference to ‘physical’ Council meetings in Standing Orders applies as if it applies to ‘remote’ Council meetings. The Remote Meetings Protocol forms part of Standing Orders (Annex 2).</p> <p>That Members consider the wording of the new Standing Order no.32 above to include the Remote Meetings Protocol (Appendix 1)</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: not applicable</p> <p>Human: not applicable</p> <p>Risk Management: Approval is required to ensure the proper administration in relation to the conduct of Council and Committee meetings.</p>

4.2	<p data-bbox="225 219 746 257">Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p data-bbox="225 297 1382 443">Equality & Good Relations Implications: Regulations are the responsibility of DfC and any associated considerations required. Officers have given consideration to any potential implications and mitigated any negative impacts identified, where possible with the introduction of hybrid meetings.</p> <p data-bbox="225 483 1414 629">Rural Needs Implications: Regulations are the responsibility of DfC and any associated considerations required. Officers have given consideration to any potential implications and mitigated any negative impacts identified, where possible with the introduction of hybrid meetings.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p data-bbox="225 745 1347 853">It is recommended that Members note the proposed amendments as detailed within Section 3.0 and any discussion on same stands adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of Council on Thursday 26th September 2024.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	<p data-bbox="225 969 916 1008">Appendix 1: Annex 2 Remote Meetings Protocol</p>