

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Council held remotely and in Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn on Thursday 6th May 2021 at 5.00 pm.

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor The Rt Hon Nicholas Trimble

Alderman W J Dillon MBE

Councillor A Givan

PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Deputy Mayor
Councillor Jenny Palmer

Aldermen J Baird, D Drysdale, A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith, A Grehan, M Henderson MBE, S Martin, S P Porter and J Tinsley

Councillors N Anderson, R T Beckett, R Carlin, S Carson, D J Craig, A P Ewing, J Gallen, A Gowan, M Gregg, M Guy, D Honeyford, S Hughes, J Lavery BEM, S Lee, S Lowry, J McCarthy, G McCleave, C McCready, U Mackin, John Palmer, S Skillen and A Swan

IN ATTENDANCE IN CHAMBER:

Chief Executive
Member Services Officers (RN & PS)
Events Technician
IT Officer

IN ATTENDANCE IN REMOTE LOCATION:

Head of Corporate Communications & Administration
Acting PCSP/Member Services Manager

Commencement of the Meeting

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor N Trimble, welcomed those present to the Special Meeting of the Council which was being live-streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings. He requested that all mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting.

The Right Worshipful The Mayor stated that, although the meeting was being live-streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders.

At this point, the Member Services Officer read out the names of the Elected Members and Officers in attendance at the meeting.

1. Apologies

It was agreed that apologies for non-attendance at the meeting be accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillors H Legge, A McIntyre, R McLernon and T Mitchell.

2. Suspension of Standing Orders

It was proposed by Alderman O Gawith, seconded by Alderman M Henderson and unanimously agreed that Standing Order 27.2 be suspended for the duration of the meeting.

The suspension of the Standing Order was required so as to enable consideration of amendments to the said Standing Orders.

3. Declarations of Interest

The Right Worshipful The Mayor invited Members to declare any interests they might have in relation to the business of the meeting and reminded them of the requirement that they complete Declaration of Interest forms in this regard which had been provided with the papers for the meeting and which were also available in the Chamber.

No declarations were made.

4. Report from Chief Executive

4.1 Remote Meetings – Amendment to Standing Orders

The Special Meeting of Council had been summoned to consider the arrangements for the convening of meetings as from the 7th May 2021 and subsequent to advice which had been reported to Council on the 27th April 2021.

Members were reminded that the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 expired at the end of the 6th May 2021 (ie midnight). As the Standing Orders contained reference to those Regulations, they now required amendment to remove specific reference thereto.

The Chief Executive took Members through the amendments to the Standing Orders and explained the ramifications thereof. The following points were highlighted:-

Planning and Committee Meetings

- All members of committees are required to attend meetings in person in LVI (be that in the Chamber or Island Hall).
- Non-committee members can access meetings via zoom.
- Meetings of the Planning Committee and of the other standing committees will be held in the Chamber with a limited number of officers physically in attendance. Heads of Service and other officers will attend on a remote basis. (Risk assessment has been carried out and allows for the aforementioned arrangement.)
- A member of a committee who attends on a remote basis shall have speaking rights but will not be able to (i) put forward a Proposal; (ii) second a Proposal; (iii) participate in a vote. Quorum number is based on physical attendance.
- Deputations by agents/speakers at meetings of the Planning Committee shall be on a remote basis.
- The live-stream of committee meetings shall continue so as to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory obligation of making meetings open to the public.

Annual Meeting and Council Meetings

- The Annual Meeting of the Council and meetings of the Council shall be held in the Island Hall which can accommodate 40 Members and a limited number of officers. (Risk assessment has been carried out and allows for the aforementioned arrangement.) Directors shall join on a remote basis.
- A member of Council who attends the Annual Meeting or a Council meeting on a remote basis shall have speaking rights but will not be able to (i) put forward a Proposal; (ii) second a Proposal; (iii) participate in a vote. Quorum number is based on physical attendance.
- The balcony area of the Island Hall can accommodate 15 members of the public thereby eliminating the need for the Council to live-stream its Annual Meeting and Council meetings.
- Members of the public will be asked to register their attendance prior to the Annual Meeting and Council meetings so that their attendance in the balcony area can be arranged.
- Audio recordings of the Annual Meeting and Council meetings will be made and uploaded to the Council's website.

The Chief Executive responded to Members' questions and noted the following:-

- That – in regard to the Planning Committee - a number of agents were anxious for an early re-instatement of the procedure whereby they made their presentations on a physical basis in the chamber. The Chief Executive advised that - whilst he was aware that some agents did in fact like the current arrangement of remote attendance, this matter would be kept under review and would also be examined.
- That - due to being clinically vulnerable - some Members may have concerns about attending meetings in a physical capacity.

- That sight of the legal advice which had been received in terms of how meetings should be held would have been useful.
- That the lack of direction from the Department for Communities on this matter was of concern.

The Chief Executive expressed the hope that there would be a definitive directive from the Department for Communities in the near future as to the arrangements for the holding of meetings and that such a directive might address a number of the concerns expressed by Members and detailed above. There is every likelihood that such directive may result in further amendments to the Council's Standing Orders.

It was proposed by Alderman M Henderson, seconded by Councillor D J Craig and unanimously agreed that the Standing Orders of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council are amended under Order 27.2 to remove references to the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will enable the Council to continue to hold meetings through a hybrid model of physical attendance and remote means.

The following items were also noted:-

- The Standing Orders of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council highlighting those amendments as proposed and subsequently agreed at the meeting.
- The Protocol for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Hybrid Meetings.

The following Members joined or left the meeting during discussion but prior to any decision being taken:-

Councillor N Anderson joined meeting at 5.02 pm
Alderman D Drysdale left meeting at 5.21 pm
Councillor A P Ewing joined meeting at 5.08 pm
Councillor A Gowan joined meeting at 5.26 pm
Councillor M Guy joined meeting at 5.03 pm
Councillor D Honeyford joined meeting at 5.06 pm
Alderman S P Porter joined meeting at 5.03 pm

5. Conclusion of Meeting

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor N Trimble, thanked those present for their attendance at the Special Meeting.

There being no further business for consideration, the Special Meeting of Council concluded at 5.29 pm.

Mayor