

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 71

Subject: Arrangements for Council and Meetings

Date of meeting: 3 February 2022

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources
Extract from the proceedings of the Policy & Resources
Committee meeting held on the 27 January 2022

Contact Officer: Name: Lisa Johnson

Email: lisa.johnson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

Action Required of Council:

To receive the report from the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration and the recommendations for approval.

Recommendations:

- (1) That the proposals set out in the report regarding arrangements for Council and committee meetings (except paragraph 3.11 dealing with attendance numbers) be approved;
- (2) That option A (14) regarding number of attendees at full Council meetings as set out in paragraph 3.12 of the report be approved.

Brighton & Hove City Council

Policy & Resources Committee

4.00pm 27 January 2022

Hove Town Hall - Council Chamber

Minutes

Present: Councillor Mac Cafferty (Chair) Druitt (Joint Deputy Chair), Gibson (Joint Deputy Chair), Allcock (Joint Opposition Spokesperson), Bell (Group Spokesperson), Clare, Evans, Yates, Mears and Platts

Also present: Dr A Biswas Sasidharan, Standing Invitee

Part One

97 ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNCIL AND MEETINGS

- 97.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Governance People and Resources which proposed arrangements for holding Council and Committee meetings during the pandemic to minimise the risk to the public, Members and officers.
- 97.2 The Committee noted the Officer Amendment to the report and to Recommendation 2.2.
- 97.3 Councillor Bell noted that in earlier discussions Group Leaders had been discussing limiting the attendance at Council to 40 Members (Option B) and asked why Recommendation 2.2 had been amended to remove that option. The Executive Director Governance People and Resources said that the amendment reflected the majority view of the Group Leaders, and if he wished he could propose an amendment to the recommendations.
- 97.4 Councillor Allcock said that we were still in the pandemic and the number of positive cases in the city was still rising. It was important to ensure that the democratic process continued with the appropriate level of scrutiny being undertaken, and that Council services were delivered as effectively as possible. Councillors also needed to be responsible for those they worked with including officers and Councillors some of whom were more vulnerable. Elected Councillors needed to lead by example and take a proactive public role in health and safety. The proposals in the report were constructive and would enable more thorough discussion, particularly at Committee level, where the venue would be less crowded and so people would be better protected. He noted that these proposals would be reviewed shortly and suggested that when they were, consideration be given to Written Questions submitted by Councillors for Committees be taken as read rather than having Members attend meetings to read them orally.

- 97.5 Councillor Mears agreed with Councillor Allcock that councillors needed to lead by example, and therefore ensure that they were not different from the rest of the city, and noted that NHS workers, bus drivers, shop workers etc were still working. She accepted that some Members may be more vulnerable, but the Council needed to be part of the bigger picture for the economy and businesses wanted the city to open up and Councillors should be part of that.
- 97.6 Councillor Clare said that we were still in the pandemic and Councillors needed to be part of the bigger picture to show that they were concerned about the health of vulnerable people. Councillors had no option but to attend meetings in person, and there had been occasions where a Member had attended a meeting and later found they were positive, which had put others at risk.
- 97.7 Councillor Evans said that these proposals were to protect people by reducing the number of people at meetings, which was the responsible thing to do.
- 97.8 Councillor Yates said that he was clinically vulnerable and the thought of attending a meeting with a large number of people concerned him. It was important for Councillors to consider the risks of attending meetings during the pandemic and the proposals put forward by officers provided a solution.
- 97.9 Dr Biswas-Sasidharan said that as a co-optee she was able to attend the meeting remotely and was concerned that other members of the committee did not have that option and were putting themselves at risk.
- 97.10 The Committee voted on the recommendations (as amended), and 8 Members agreed and 2 Members (Conservative Group) voted against.
- 97.11 RESOLVED:** That the Committee –
- (i) Agreed the proposals set out in this report regarding arrangements for Council and committee meetings (except paragraph 3.11 dealing with attendance numbers) and recommends them to Council for approval;
 - (ii) Agreed option A (14) regarding number of attendees at full Council meetings as set out in paragraph 3.12 and recommend them to full Council for approval.

