

Council

21 July 2022

Agenda Item 17

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Review of Committee Arrangements		
Date of Meeting:	21 July 2022		
Report of:	Executive Director Governance, People & Resources		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Elizabeth Culbert	Tel: 01273 291515
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 At full Council on 7th April the Protocol for Council meetings was agreed (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The arrangements set out in the Protocol will cease to have effect from the end of full Council on 21st July unless there is agreement to extend them.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That full Council agrees that the arrangements set out in the attached Protocol should cease to have effect immediately following the full Council meeting on 21st July 2022, subject to recommendations 2.2 and 2.3 below.
- 2.2 That full Council agrees that attendees are required to continue to wear masks at full Council and Committee meetings and to take an LFT test before attending those meetings, as set out at paragraph 3.6-3.7 of the report.
- 2.3 That the arrangements will be kept under review and the Chief Executive be granted delegated powers to modify the requirement regarding the wearing of masks and need for a lateral flow test ahead of Council or committee meetings if, following consultation with Group Leaders, he considers it appropriate.
- 2.4 That full Council notes the information in relation to ventilation at Hove Town Hall set out at paragraph 3.10-3.11 of the report.

3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1 The agreed arrangements relating to Council and Committee meetings were made in the light of ongoing concerns regarding the Covid 19 pandemic and having regard to infection rates in the City and were arrived at following consultation with public health and health and safety colleagues. The arrangements were designed to afford protection as far as possible from the risk of infection for Councillors and Officers who were required to attend the meeting in person.

3.2 A summary of the arrangements as set out in the attached protocol is below:-

- An advisory restriction in numbers for full Council to 14;
- A requirement to wear masks for all Council and Committee meetings;
- The need to undertake lateral flow test before meetings;
- Virtual Public and Member engagement sessions with a one-hour gap before the main in person meeting of full Council;
- Advisory guidance regarding oral questions, petitions for debate, notices of motion and reports for information;
- Enhanced Officer Delegated powers.

3.3 Whilst data sources in relation to Covid rates in the City are reduced, the indication from Public Health colleagues in early June was that R was below 1 and case rates were generally reassuring. However, over recent weeks this position has changed and the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) COVID-19 infection survey data](#) shows 1 in 25 people in Brighton & Hove testing positive for COVID-19 (data correct for 8 July).

3.4 This is the same as the estimated rate for England which is also 1 in 25 as at 8 July. Nationally, COVID-19 infections have increased by around 500,000 in the week ending 8th July. Alongside this, we are now seeing a higher [number of patients with confirmed COVID-19 in hospital](#) and UKHSA expects hospital numbers to rise further. The latest R Value is 1.1-1.4 for the South East.

3.5 The requirement to wear masks has been re-introduced in NHS clinical settings across Sussex from 12th July 2022.

3.6 In this context, and following the advice of the Council's Public Health Team, it is recommended that attendees at full Council and Committee meetings continue to be required to wear masks in those settings. There will be a supply of suitable masks available from Democratic Services and in meeting rooms for Members who need them. It is also recommended, taking into account the information set out below at paragraphs 3.10- 3.11, that attendees be permitted to remove their masks while speaking, should they wish to do so.

3.7 In addition, it is recommended in this report that members and officers attending full Council and Committee meetings are requested to undertake an LFT test prior to attending those meetings and do not attend if they have a positive test or if they are suffering from any symptoms. LFT tests can be obtained from Democratic Services for this purpose.

3.8 It is recommended that the above requirements are kept under review and that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, following consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to these requirements in response to changes in infection rates in the City.

3.9 The ongoing message remains regarding the principles of good ventilation and avoiding attending meetings face to face if unwell, have a temperature, or have flu or Covid-like symptoms. The message on vaccination is that it reduces the risk of serious disease.

- 3.10 Hove Town Hall has an extremely high specification ventilation system, managed through a building management system. The system brings fresh air into the building that is filtered, and takes out fresh air that is also filtered. The air is not recirculated.
- 3.11 There are seven Fresh Air Handling machines across Hove Town Hall, the majority of which are situated on the roof, that provide filtered fresh air to all spaces and remove stale air through separate air extraction systems. They change the air in the entire building up to nine times per hour, dependent on occupation numbers. This maintains the oxygen content in the atmosphere and ensures there is not a build up of CO₂, as well as helping to prevent the spread of airborne viruses.
- 3.12 It is recommended that, with the above measures in place, the remaining arrangements set out in the attached Protocol are discontinued.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council has the option of continuing with all the arrangements outlined in the attached Protocol or discontinuing all measures. However, the proposals in the report are recommended as achieving a proportionate response, reducing restrictions to enable increased attendance and transparency of decision making whilst maintaining measures recognised as offering protection from infection, ie wearing masks and LFT testing.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The proposals in this report relate mainly to internal council processes. If the recommendations are agreed, public engagement sessions will be able to take place in person and the facility for members of the public to attend the in-person meetings will no longer be restricted to 6. There will therefore be no adverse impact so far as the public are concerned.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposals in the report are considered a proportionate way of reducing the risk of infection whilst ensuring accessibility to Council decision making.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no material financial implications arising from this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis

Date: 11/07/22

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The proposals in the report comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Council's obligations under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 There are no adverse equalities implications arising from this report. The ability of the public to present questions, petitions or deputations virtually, should they prefer, will be preserved. Where any reasonable adjustments are necessary to enable an individual to take part or follow the proceedings, that will be accommodated.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There may be more travel undertaken as a result of increased in person attendance by the public for public engagement items but this will be mitigated by retaining the option of virtual attendance which it is anticipated will be taken up by many.

Public Health

- 7.5 The Council's Public Health Team have been consulted in relation to the recommendations in this report and have provided the up to date data set out in the report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - April 2022 Protocol for Council and Committee meetings.

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

