

COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
9 DECEMBER 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Director of Law and Governance	
Contact Officer(s):	Pippa Turvey, Democratic and Constitutional Services Manager	Tel. 452460

AMENDMENT TO THE VIRTUAL MEETINGS PROTOCOL

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Director of Law & Governance	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to amend the 'Virtual Meetings Protocol' as adopted by Council on 29 July 2020, to restrict Questions on Notice from Members to be answered in writing only (on a trial basis), as per the wording set out in paragraph 2.4, to enable more time for the debate of council motions. 	

1. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose a revision to the meeting protocol for virtual meetings only, in relation to the consideration of Questions on Notice from Members.

2. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 As set out in the Council's Standing Orders, Questions on Notice from Members can currently be asked to the Mayor, the Leader or member of the Cabinet, the chair of any committee or sub-committee, or any representative of the Council on the Combined Authority.
- 2.2 30 minutes are set aside for questions to the Mayor, the Leader or cabinet members, or committee chairs. 15 minutes are set aside for questions to Combined Authority representatives.
- 2.3 Following the limitation within the Virtual Meetings Protocol that virtual meetings shall not last for longer than three hours, consideration has been given to how business at meetings may become more efficient, in order to ensure that items such as motions may be given sufficient time for debate.
- 2.4 As such, it is proposed that the below paragraph be added into the Virtual Meetings Protocol:

"Members' Questions on Notice

3.4 The Council will continue to take written questions to the Mayor, Leader, cabinet members, and chair of any committee provided the appropriate notice is given as set out in the Constitution. However, responses to questions will not be provided verbally at the meeting. Instead, written responses will be published ahead of the Council meeting, within the additional information pack. The provision to ask supplementary questions will not be available at the meeting."

- 2.5 This would allow for up to an additional 45 minutes of time to consider other items, such as motions. Written responses to questions would be published within the additional information pack as a 'Questions and Answers Report', in place of the current 'Questions Report'.
- 2.6 This approach would mean that Members would not have the opportunity to ask supplementary questions verbally at the Council meeting. Any further questions arising from responses given could, however, be asked directly to the responder outside of the meeting environment.
- 2.7 It is also important to note that no change is proposed to Questions on Notice from members of the Public, which would continue to be responded to verbally at the meeting. Members of the public would also continue to be permitted to ask supplementary questions.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Group Leaders at the Group Leaders' meeting held on 16 November 2020 and it was unanimously agreed to introduce this change on a trial basis, subject to Council's approval.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial, legal, equalities or carbon impact implications arising from this report.

5. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 5.1 Peterborough City Council Constitution
Peterborough City Council Virtual Meetings Protocol

6. APPENDICES

- 6.1 None.