

<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 8</b>
<b>27 JANUARY 2021</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

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**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM: Director of Law &amp; Governance</b>	<b>Deadline date: N/A</b>
<p>It is recommended that Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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, as per the wording set out in paragraph 2.4, to enable more time for the debate of council motions. The ability to ask an oral supplementary question at the meeting will remain.</li> </ol>	

### **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 oral supplementary questions will still remain available to Members 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 Following the suspension of verbal answers to Members questions at the Full Council meeting on 9 December 2020 on a one-off trial basis, Group Leaders considered the proposal and felt that it remained important for Members to retain the power to ask supplementary questions at the meeting and receive a verbal response to these.
- 2.7 No change is proposed to Questions on Notice from members of the Public, which would continue to be responded to verbally at the meeting.

### **3. CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Group Leaders at the Group Leaders’ meeting held on 11 January 2021.

### **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.



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