



Devizes
Town Council

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DEVIZES TOWN **COUNCIL** **Special Meeting**

You are summonsed to attend a Special Meeting of the Devizes Town Council at the following place and date:

Date: Tuesday 24th March 2020

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Town Hall, St John's Street, Devizes

Enquiries: Town Hall - Tel: 01380 722160

Councillors:	Bridewell	Burton	Corbett
	Carter	P Evans	S Evans
	Gay	Geddes	Giraud-Saunders
	Godwin	Greenwood	Hopkins
	Johnson	Nash	Parsons
	Pennington	Rose	Rowland
	Shaw	Stevens	Von Berg

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 12th March 2020.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DISCLOSURE(S) OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosures by a Councillor(s) and/or Officers in matters to be considered at this meeting in accordance with the provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

4. REPORT FOR DECISION – THAT THE COUNCIL MAKES CHANGES TO ITS STRUCTURE TO ENSURE IT CAN STILL ACT AS A DEMOCRATIC BODY DURING TIMES OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR LOCAL EMERGENCY

Recommendation

The Committee needs to decide if it wishes to put in place measures that will enable the Council to operate effectively during this health risk period.

Purpose of the Report

To put in place emergency meeting procedures during the current health risk period.

Background

With the spread of Coronavirus Covid-19, the Council needs to consider putting in place measures that will help protect those Councillors who are most at risk from the virus, yet allow the Council to continue to operate as an elected and democratic body.

Officers are suggesting the following measures:

- Establish a Cabinet Committee with a limited membership, that transacts the majority of the Council's business. The principle will be that the decisions it makes on the whole will be essential and non-controversial.

It is proposed that all Members of the Council will be elected to the Cabinet but with only a limited number of Full Members, with other Members being deputies, allowing for substitution should the need arise.

Whilst the guidance is unclear about deputising at Town Council level, as members need to be appointed to a Committee, by setting out within Standing Order the arrangements that all Councillors are elected to the Committee and under what circumstances substitutions will be permitted, there is clarity about which Members are authorised to vote.

- The Civic Awards for 2020 are postponed to later in the year, but the Annual Town Meeting is held, with the reports following the meeting being published online with an opportunity to raise questions.
- The Mayor Making for the 2020 Civic year is undertaken as scheduled but without the normal invited audience. The Annual Town's Meeting (Mayor Making) needs to be held in May of any civic year.

Should the Committee agree these measures, then Standing Orders will need to be amended to reflect the new Committee and its delegated authority.

Options Considered

The Council needs to decide if it agrees to the emergency committee arrangements during the current health crisis.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Officers are unaware of any financial or resource implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence.

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

5. REPORT FOR DECISION – CHANGE TO STANDING ORDERS TO INCLUDE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS

Recommendation

That the Committee agrees changes in Standing Orders to allow for a Cabinet Committee.

Purpose of the Report

To agree changes in Standing Orders that streamline the Council's committee structure during national, regional or local crisis.

Background

Nationally we are moving into unprecedented times, where groups of people are being advised not to gather. Legislation does not allow for the Council to simply stop meeting in public, but it does allow local authorities to make changes that will help us to continue to operate as a democratic body whilst trying to minimise the risk of spreading the Covid-19 to more at-risk members of the Council.

The previous agenda item has suggested ways that the Council may want to minimise the spread of Covid19

Set out below is my suggested change to Sanding Orders.

Remit of Cabinet Committee (7 Full Members 14 Deputies)

XX. During times of national, regional or local emergency, the Council may suspend the normal committee structure and appoint a Cabinet Committee for a term of not more than six months, which is empowered to exercise and perform all powers and duties of the Council, with the exception of those matters listed below:

(a) Precepting a rate

(b) Borrowing money

(c) Making, amending or revoking bye laws

(c) Making of Orders under any statutory powers

(e) Prosecution or defence in a court of law.

The Full Members of the Cabinet can appoint Deputies in the event that they are unable to attend through illness or self-confinement. The Cabinet Committee can delegate any of its powers to a sub-committee. The Cabinet Committee is empowered to incur expenditure where there is an allocated budget or make extraordinary payment if in the interests of the Council and community of Devizes. The committee will meet every three weeks.

At any time after the Committee has been appointed, it can determine that its emergency function is no longer necessary and request that Full Council reinstates the normal committee structure.

A full amended copy of Standing Orders has been attached for information.

Options Considered

The Committee needs to decide if it wishes to agree the amendments to Standing Orders, as set out in the report, reject them or amend them.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Officers are unaware of any financial or resource implication for the Council associated with this decision

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

6. TO PASS THE FOLLOWING SEALING RESOLUTION

THAT the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to or the Town Clerk do sign on behalf of the Council where appropriate any Orders, Deeds or Documents necessary to give effect to any of the matters and recommendations contained in the reports received and adopted at this meeting or other decisions of the Council thereat.

7. QUESTION TIME

A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Town Mayor for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

At least 24 hours' notice must be given to officers of the intended question. All other matters should be raised on an agenda and the request should be submitted through the Town Clerk

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions addressed to the Chairman concerning the administration, function or responsibilities of the Council or upon a matter, which was the subject of debate at the meeting.

A person may also be permitted to make a statement or address the Council upon a matter of concern to that person which is relevant to local government, or to the Council's administration or upon a subject, which may be of general interest to the Council. A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Council for this item of business.



Town Mayor