

ANNUAL COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday, 11 May 2022

Title: Future of Meetings

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Background

At the meeting held on 11th April 2022, the Council deferred a decision on the future format of cyclical committee meetings in light of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, to allow all members' comments to be considered.

As previously advised, there is no legislation to allow members to officially take part in virtual or hybrid committee meeting and the council has so far held them as advisories with decisions being ratified at Full Council.

Current Situation

A survey was circulated to all members electronically and the results from this are as follows:

Future of Meetings Survey (Survey Monkey) Results (as of Tuesday 3rd May)

There were seven responses declared.

Which committee meeting format would you currently prefer (May-June cycle)?

In Person	5
Virtual	2

Please enter any additional concerns, comments, or suggestions

- I am happy to do either as long as it fits with other members
- Anywhere other than the Main Hall in Corn Exchange
- Whilst I sympathise with shielding members, I am willing to wear and speak in a good mask to protect them and I do think that FFP2 masks and ventilation can make the risk very low. I am concerned that waiting for full council to ratify decisions delays council operations.
- I am still being careful with a vulnerable person in the house so virtual is better for us as can attend these comfortably.

There were no further comments.

Members may like to consider treating Climate, Biodiversity & Planning differently to the other standing committees as this has the delegated authority to return consultation responses which are then ratified by Full Council anyway.

Risk

The risk to continuing virtual advisory meetings is the delay in conducting the Council's decisions.

The risk in holding in-person meetings is the impact on the democratic process of the Council if members are unable to attend due to concerns over Covid. For such members, if in-person were to continue the Council may like to consider continuing special dispensation for a set period.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report, and

- Consider which format of meetings should be held moving forward; and,
- If this is to be in-person, that any mitigating measures are explored to make them as safe as possible.