

# COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

## Recording of Attendance, Apologies and Absences at Meetings 5 November 2015

### Report of the Chief Officer (Governance)

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Committee members of current procedures regarding the recording of attendance, apologies and absences at meetings for their consideration.

**This report is public**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the Committee considers the information in this report.

##### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report has been requested by a member who is concerned about the recording of attendance at meetings, particularly when apologies are given. The attendance details published on the Council's website show the percentage of meetings absent. The Member was particularly concerned that this percentage also includes absences from Committee meetings where the Councillor has given apologies and sent a substitute and asked if this could be changed so that when a substitute has attended a meeting in place of a Committee Member, the Committee Member is not recorded as "absent" in the published information.

##### 2.0 Current Procedures

2.1 Currently, details of Councillors' attendance and absences are recorded on the Council's electronic committee management information system Modern.gov. The clerk of the meeting enters the attendance details when typing up the draft minutes and the information typed in is linked to each Councillor's profile. The way the attendance details appear on the Council's website is shown using a fictional example below:

#### Attendance statistics for Councillor Example

Statistic	Count	Percentage
Total expected attendances:	15	
Present as expected:	12	80%
Apologies received:	3	100% of absences
Absent (incl. apologies):	3	20%

#### Explanation of the statistics counts

**Total expected attendances**

The number of meetings that the councillor was expected to attend in their capacity as member of that committee. This only includes meetings for which the councillor's actual attendance status is known.

**Present as expected**

The number of meetings that the councillor attended in their capacity as member of that committee.

**Absent (incl. apologies)**

Meetings not attended, where the councillor is a member of the committee, including apologies submitted.

**Other meeting statistics options**

- [View statistics for each committee attended](#)

Meeting summary for Councillor Example		
Date	Committee Meeting	Attendance
04/03/2015	<a href="#">Council ,04/03/2015</a>	Present
15/04/2015	<a href="#">Council ,15/04/2015</a>	Present
22/05/2015	<a href="#">Council ,22/05/2015</a>	Present
22/05/2015	<a href="#">Council ,22/05/2015</a>	Present
26/05/2015	<a href="#">Council ,26/05/2015</a>	Present
06/06/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name, 06/06/2015</a>	Present
16/06/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name ,15/06/2015</a>	Present
18/06/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name,18/06/2015</a>	Present
30/06/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name,30/06/2015</a>	Apologies received
08/07/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name ,08/07/2015</a>	Present
15/07/2015	<a href="#">Council ,15/07/2015</a>	Present
15/07/2015	<a href="#">Council ,15/07/2015</a>	Present
27/07/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name,27/07/2015</a>	Present
17/08/2015	<a href="#">Committee Meeting name,17/08/2015</a>	Apologies received
24/08/2015	<a href="#">Committee meeting name ,24/08/2015</a>	Apologies received

- 2.2 The information does make it clear in the explanatory notes that the percentage of absences includes instances where the Councillor sent apologies. There is no provision on the Modern.gov statistical system to differentiate between instances when apologies were given and when apologies were given and a substitute attended the meeting in place of a Member, although it is the convention for clerks to write that information into the minutes.
- 2.3 An important purpose of entering the absence information into the Modern.gov system is that it has the functionality to flag up non-attendance, at the four month stage, to the Democratic Services Manager (DSM). At that point the DSM will contact the Councillor concerned, and the group leader in the case of a group member, to alert him or her that they appear to be approaching six months without attending a meeting. This gives the member an opportunity to dispute this, if they have attended any qualifying meetings (such as Cabinet Liaison Groups, for example) which are not clerked by Democratic Services staff and recorded on Modern.gov. Alternatively, it gives the member sufficient time to make arrangements to attend a meeting in the next two months and avoid losing their seat on the Council.
- 2.4 It would not be a suitable solution to count absences where a Councillor sends a substitute to a Committee meeting as being 'present'. This would skew the absence records and the electronic system would no longer prompt the DSM automatically when a Councillor reached the four month absence mark. This could also result in unnecessary by-elections as Members have always

attended when prompted at the four month point in the past, or have requested that a report be put to Council to extend their absence period, in case of long term illness.

- 2.5 Another possible solution, to publish a percentage of meetings, where the Councillor gave apologies and a substitute member attended, would be difficult and time-consuming to achieve because it would have to be done manually. There is no facility for this to be put in place on the existing software.

### 3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 Members are invited to discuss the information in this report. The DSM will be attending the meeting to provide any further information necessary.

<b>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health &amp; Safety, Equality &amp; Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</b>
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None.

<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that “if a member fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.”

It is important to have a system of recording Members’ attendance at meetings in place to flag up to the Democratic Services Manager when a Member is nearing six months without attending a meeting.

<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

<b>OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Human Resources:**

None.

**Information Services:**

None.

**Property:**

None.

**Open Spaces:**

None.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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