

Annual Council Meeting 2020

28 April 2020

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable Council to make a decision whether to hold either/both of its scheduled annual meetings or not, and what form such meeting(s) should take, having regard to the information and options in this report.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Council makes a decision whether to hold either or both of its annual council meetings scheduled for May 2020, or not.**
- (2) If Council decides to hold either or both annual meetings, decisions are required about Mayor-making having regard to the information in this report and the options presented in paragraph 2.2; decisions are also required about the other business to be placed on the agenda for the annual meeting having regard to the options in paragraph 2.5.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 For many years, Lancaster City Council has traditionally split its annual meeting into two parts, with Mayor-making followed by a celebratory meal on Friday at noon in the Ashton Hall, and the business of the annual council meeting being transacted on the following Monday at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber at Morecambe Town Hall. The dates scheduled for the meetings this year are Friday 15th and Monday 18th May. For information, the list of items to be considered at an annual meeting is appended for information.
- 1.2 As a result of the COVID-10 pandemic, the government recently introduced new regulations which lift the obligation on a local authority to have an annual meeting (Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020). In a case where a local authority decides not to hold a remote annual meeting, all appointments – including the Mayor – will stay in place until the annual meeting in 2021.

- 1.3 Alternatively, the regulations allow for annual meetings to be postponed until later in the year, when it is hoped that public meetings and gatherings will be resumed.
- 1.4 This meeting is the first Council meeting to be held remotely and it should be noted that, if Council does wish to hold either or both parts of its annual meeting in May 2020, remote meetings would be the only option at this point in time.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 There are many options that Council may wish to consider regarding the Friday meeting for Mayor-making and the Monday evening business meeting. Several are set out here:

- 2.2 **Mayor Making** - three options in particular are presented here.

- a) That a remote meeting be held to appoint the Mayor-elect to the role of Mayor and for the new Mayor to appoint his Deputy Mayor. With this option, there could be no celebratory meal in May, but this could be held when restrictions are lifted.
 - b) That no Mayor-making meeting is held in May 2020 and the current Mayor, Councillor David Whitaker, continues in the role for a further 12 months period. The Mayor-elect, Councillor Malcolm Thomas, would then be appointed in May 2021. Whilst this seems a long term of office, many months of Councillor Whitaker's engagements and activities as Mayor have been cancelled, due to COVID-19 restrictions.
 - c) That a Mayor-making meeting be postponed until November 2020, when it is hoped that meetings in person will have been resumed and it may be permissible to hold the celebratory meal following the meeting. Under this option it is proposed that Councillor Thomas would then serve as Mayor until May 2022 allowing both Councillor Whitaker and Councillor Thomas to have an 18-month (approx.) term as Mayor.
- 2.3 There is no officer-preferred option. All options proposed are lawful and achievable. The issues raised are for Members to decide, however, with option c), it is impossible to be certain that there will be no restrictions in place in November.
- 2.4 Should the Council choose option a), then it is assumed the date and time of the remote meeting will be 12pm on 15th May 2020, as scheduled, unless Council indicates otherwise.
- 2.5 **Other Business at Annual Council**
- 2.6 The options presented are
- a) to have the meeting remotely and deal with all business at the meeting.
 - b) to have a remote meeting which deals with some of the business (for example, if Council wanted to set up a new committee, this can only be done at the annual meeting).
 - c) to postpone the meeting until restrictions on meetings are lifted.

- d) not to hold a meeting and for all appointments and memberships of committees to continue.

2.7 Again, there is no officer preferred option as all options are permissible and achievable. If option a) is chosen by Council, it is assumed the date and time for the meeting will be 6.30pm on Monday 18 May 2020 as scheduled, unless Council indicates otherwise.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 Council is asked to consider the information in this report and take a decision regarding how to proceed with the scheduled annual meetings.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing) None.	
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS These are set out in the report.	
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS There are no significant financial implications as a result of this report. Any costs of all the options available can be met from existing budgets and may result in some small savings.	
OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS None.	
SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.	
MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments.	
BACKGROUND PAPERS None	Contact Officer: Debbie Chambers Telephone: 01524 582057 E-mail: dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk Ref:

Business considered at the Annual Council Meeting (extract from the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution)

- (a) elect a person to preside if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council are not present;
- (b) elect the Mayor of the Council;
- (c) appoint the Deputy Mayor of the Council;
- (d) approve the Minutes of the previous Ordinary meeting;
- (e) receive any announcements from the Mayor and/or Chief Executive;
- (f) elect the Leader of the Council should the post be vacant;
- (g) note the Executive Arrangements and delegation of Executive and other functions
- (h) determine the Committees and allocation of seats and substitutes to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules;
- (i) receive nominations of Councillors to serve on each Committee and outside bodies; and appoint to those Committees and outside bodies except where appointment to those bodies has been delegated by the Council or is exercisable only by the Cabinet (as set out in **Part 2**, of this Constitution);
- (j) appoint a Chair for each Committee of Council;
- (k) appoint to the Council's Veterans Champion Role;
- (l) consider any business set out in the notice convening that meeting.