

## Notice of Officer Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Extension of the suspension of Council, Cabinet and committee meetings and the new regulations on remote meetings
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Andrew BlakeHerbert, Chief Executive
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Andrew Beesley Head of Democratic Services Andrew.beesley@onesource.co.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020
<b>Financial summary:</b>	There are no financial implications involving in the drafting of this report
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Board

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Part A – Report seeking decision

#### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

Following the outbreak of coronavirus a decision was made in mid-March, following consultation with Group Leaders, and the decision to implement the Influenza Pandemic Plan and therefore move to GOLD to suspend all Full Council, Cabinet and committee meetings for a six week period expiring on 30 April 2020. The prudent decision, made prior to the Government's decision to go into lockdown, was made to protect the health and wellbeing of both staff and Members, a number of whom would

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subsequently have been included in the vulnerable category for being at risk of falling ill should they catch the virus.

At that time, it was agreed that all COVID-19 related executive decisions made through the scheme of delegation would be recorded and published to the Council's website, with all Members notified during the process. Virtual weekly All Member and Group Leader Briefings were also established to ensure Member engagement throughout the period of lockdown

In the intervening period, the Government introduced new meeting regulations as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020. The regulations (known as 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020') came into effect from 4 April 2020 and permit meetings to be held in a remote format, accessible by audio or video link. Therefore, meetings can be convened with attendees joining from separate locations. Members attending remote meetings must however be able to hear and be heard by all other members attending and any members of the public attending and entitled to speak.

A remote Licensing Sub-Committee hearing took place on 24 April 2020 using audio conference technology. Whilst the feedback was largely positive, participants emphasised the improvement meeting transparency would have by using video conference technology. Since then, Officers have been testing the technology to ensuring the Council and its Members are equipped to meet the new regulations, including the rollout of enhanced IT hardware.

It would likely be mid-May before the Council is in a position to conduct a remote committee meeting using video conference technology. The regulations permit Councils to determine its scheduling of meetings. Meetings can be held at any time, on any day at any time of day. Meetings can also be moved or cancelled without further notice and can be held less frequently or more frequently.

Additionally, the regulations stipulate that the Council no longer has to hold an annual meeting in 2020, with appointments that would normally be made at the annual meeting in 2020 continuing until the next annual meeting is held in 2021. The Council can however still decide to hold its annual meeting later in the municipal year.

Discussions with Group Leader have indicated support for extending the suspension during the lockdown period but with a view to using the regulatory committees for the first rollout of remote meetings using video conference technology. Subject to the successful implementation of the technology, there will be a further decision required to agree a revised meeting schedule for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.

For the reasons outlined above, it is therefore requested to extend the suspension of Council, Cabinet and committee meetings to 31 May, except for the Council's Planning, Strategic Planning and Licensing Committees which will operate remotely using video conferencing technology. The first meeting of the Planning Committee will be 14 May 2020.

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**AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

Council Constitution, Part3, Section 3.2, Powers of the Chief Executive.

(c) To carry out the functions of the Council for civil aid and emergency planning and to take any action, including incurring expenditure, in connection with an emergency or a disaster in the borough T

**STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

The regulations permit Councils to determine their schedule of meetings in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ordinarily, the decision to suspend meetings would be a matter for Full Council, however given the practical and technological challenges to convene a meeting of Full Council during lockdown, the Chief Executive has, following agreement with Group Leader, agreed to the temporary extension with a view the delivering a phased rollout of Council, Cabinet and committee meetings using video conference technology.

**NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Andrew Beesley

Designation: Head of Democratic Services

Signature:

Date:

## **Part B - Assessment of implications and risks**

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

It is a matter for Council to determine its meeting arrangements in accordance with relevant statute, including the recently released 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020'. The Chief Executive has power within the Constitution to determine the decision. It has however been taken following consultation with and the agreement of Group Leaders.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no immediate financial implications and risks associated with the report

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

There are no immediate HR implications and risks associated with the report

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no immediate equalities implications and risks associated with this report.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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### **Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

#### **Decision**

Proposal agreed

#### **Details of decision maker**

Name: Andrew BlakeHerbert

CMT Member title: Chief Executive

Date: 11 May 2020

#### **Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

#### **For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_