

NOTICE OF MOTION – CLLR L LYONS – PAPERLESS MEETINGS

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 11 February 2021, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor L Lyons

“Following new practice as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, this Council has operated hugely successfully without the need to print papers and courier them to Members across the Borough.

- (i) As a permanent matter of policy, this Council will operate all public meetings and task group meetings without printed papers, instead distributing them to Members and relevant Officers by electronic digital means.
- (ii) This Council will work towards operating all functions, involving all members of staff and associated contractors, without the need for printed papers.
- (iii) Exceptions may be made for complex planning documents containing diagrams and images, or which may be presented on non-standard paper sizes.
- (iv) Due consideration and exceptions will be made for those Members and Officers with additional physical needs.
- (v) Appropriate training will be offered to Members and Officers to enable them to use electronic digital alternatives to printed papers effectively.”

Officer Comment

“The Council has consistently sought to reduce the need to print and circulate papers for its meetings. By way of example, Article 12.06 of the Constitution provided for there to be a “paperless” approach to meetings, subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions. Progress was made in achieving this ambition, but it was not practical to prohibit the production of paper documents for all Council meetings. Office 365 technology, which is being introduced at the Council, will reduce the need for printed papers (as will improvements resulting from the Digital Transformation Strategy).

In April 2020, the Constitution was amended and now provides that hard copies of the summons, agenda, reports and background papers for meetings shall not be produced. This formed part of changes to the Council’s operational requirements necessitated by the Coronavirus pandemic. It was introduced as a temporary measure and only applies until 7 May 2021. This is consistent with the temporary Coronavirus legislative changes introduced by the Government.

The spirit behind the Notice of Motion is supported. However, it will be necessary to review the extent to which the Council could do what is requested and comply with statutory provisions that may apply from May 2021, e.g. Access to Information regulations. It is hoped that the Government’s intention in respect of these provisions will become clearer over the coming months. On that basis, if the generality of the Notice of Motion is supported by Council on 8 April 2021, a report could be presented to the Executive on 17 June 2021, with a recommendation going to Council on 29 July 2021. Any substantive changes that were agreed would take effect from that date.”

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Background Papers: None.

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