

FULL COUNCIL	3 DECEMBER 2020	AGENDA ITEM: 14
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Report prepared by Angie Price – Town Clerk

CHECKLIST FOR HOLDING AN IN-PERSON COUNCIL MEETING

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to ask Members to give consideration to the attached checklist for holding an in-person meeting during the Covid-19 Pandemic, which has been provided by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

Detailed Information

In a recent edition of the SLCC Clerk magazine they included an article on how Council's should consider whether they should be holding face to face meetings or continue on-line. As part of this advice they provided a link to the attached document.

The Clerk has completed the attached form as far as possible, however Members are now required to consider the information provided by the Clerk and provide an answer to questions 7 and 8 based on the information provided by the Clerk to the remaining statements.

Recommendation

That Members agree that the Council should continue to hold it's committee and Council meetings via electronic means until such time government guidance changes to make it possible for meetings to be held face-to-face without restrictions on the numbers attending and the need for social distancing.

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CHECKLIST FOR HOLDING AN IN-PERSON COUNCIL MEETING

Following the government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4 July, both NALC and SLCC strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face-to-face contact.

If the council wishes to consider returning to face-to-face meetings then there are a range of issues that will need to be addressed before this can take place. This checklist will help the council ensure this decision is made in accordance with relevant regulations and requirements.

Further guidance related to COVID-19 can be found on the NALC and SLCC websites.

	Item	Confirmed
1	There is no way for the council to conduct business except through a face-to-face meeting.	
	The council staff and councillors are unable to conduct business without a face-to-face meeting. <i>Note: The <u>government rules</u> still state that we should all work from home if we can.</i>	This is not the case, recent legislation allows for electronic meetings
	The council is unable to make use of telephone or online technology to conduct quorate council meetings. <i>Note: Local councils <u>have the powers</u> to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021. Parish meetings do not have such powers to meet remotely.</i>	This is not the case, the council have been holding their meetings remotely since June 2020
	The council has a reasonable business need, or legal need to meet in person at this time. <i>Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 state that a public authority can only hold a gathering of over 30 people if certain conditions are met</i>	Council can function without meeting in person
2	Action has been taken to seek a number of options for an appropriate venue for the council meeting.	
	These venues comply with normal council meeting requirements.	No – officers have contacted halls for availability and have been advised buildings not

	<i>Note: NALC members can access <u>Legal Topic Note 5 – Parish and community council meetings</u>.</i>	available for hire – Market House is not suitable as does not allow access under DDA 2005
	The venues allow the public to observe council meetings with social distancing without placing restrictions on the number attending.	The only building that the council could use would be the committee room – this does not allow sufficient room for social distancing without placing restrictions on numbers attending
	The venues conform with the government guidance for <u>multi-purpose community facilities</u> and for <u>council buildings</u> .	No
	If the venue is not owned/managed by the council the owners have been asked for their risk assessment and what actions they are taking to reduce risk.	N/A
3	There is a potential venue the council can use in compliance with the above requirements.	No
4	The council understands and is acting in compliance with 'safer workplaces' guidance.	Yes
5	The council has checked if there are councillors or staff that will be unable to attend face-to-face meetings due to health, disability or other reasons.	Yes
	The council has considered how it will make reasonable adjustments to allow individuals with disabilities or other needs to take part in the meeting.	Yes – and as stated above it is not possible to meet the requirements of the DDA 2005
	The council has considered a <u>hybrid approach</u> to meetings.	This is not possible for the reasons as stated above – the council cannot provide a suitable venue which without restricting those in attendance

6	A <u>risk assessment</u> has been conducted.	
	<p>Consideration has been taken towards what the council can do to reduce risk to councillors, staff and public including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing hand sanitiser to those entering the meeting room and making sure hand sanitiser is readily available in the room itself. • Staggering arrival times for staff, councillors and members of the public. • Ensuring seating is placed at least 2-metre apart. • Asking people to wear face masks. • Holding paperless meetings. • If papers are provided, people should be discouraged from sharing with others and asked to take the papers with them at the end of the meeting to minimise how many people handle the papers. • Arranging seating so people are not facing each other directly. • Choosing a venue with good air flow, including opening windows and doors where possible <p><i>Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 require that the person responsible for organising the gathering has carried out a risk assessment and the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission taking into account the risk assessment.</i></p>	<p>A risk assessment has been carried out on the council offices in respect of staff working and councillors and members of the public attending meetings.</p> <p>The outcome of that risk assessment is as stated above – no suitable venue can be identified to provide a space large enough for face-to-face or hybrid meetings without having to place restrictions on the numbers attending, taking into account social distancing and/ to provide access to all as per the DDA 2005</p>
7	The council has decided, based on the risk assessment and with risk management actions that it is safe and appropriate to meet.	
8	All risk mitigating actions identified by the risk assessment have taken place.	

This checklist has been conducted to the council's satisfaction and it has been agreed that the council will hold a face-to-face (or hybrid) meeting.

The council will re-evaluate this decision following the first council meeting held, and where necessary the risk assessment and risk management activities will be updated. Following this, the council will review this checklist [quarterly/after each council meeting/at times to be agreed by the council/delete as appropriate].

Date	
Signature	

This document was produced by NALC and SLCC and all due care has been taken that it is accurate and reflects current government guidance and legislation at the time of writing (July 2020). This document is designed as an aid to council decision-making, it does not constitute legal advice and neither organisation is responsible for the actions of councils who use this document.

The council is responsible for the health and safety of staff, councillors and others attending council meetings. The council must take care to check it is working to the most up-to-date government guidance and legislation.

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