

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Thursday 26 August 2021

Review of Political Management Arrangements – August 2021

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note that physical meetings of executive committees will re-commence with the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 5 October 2021.
- 1.2 To agree that meetings of the City of Edinburgh Council will continue to be virtual until the Council removes the physical distancing requirement in its buildings.
- 1.3 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with relevant Conveners and Vice-Conveners, to agree an appropriate time to reinstate physical Other Committees and Sub-Committees (as set out in the Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions) including quasi-judicial meetings, following the successful implementation of physical executive committees.
- 1.4 To delegate authority to the Proper Officer, in consultation with the relevant Convener, to determine whether a hybrid meeting should revert to being remote only in situations where the numbers of members attending virtually mean that it is impractical to run and support the meeting effectively.

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Review of Political Management Arrangements – August 2021

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report sets out the proposed meeting arrangements to carry out Council and Committee business going forward.

3. Background

- 3.1 In response to the Covid-19 emergency; specifically, to establish quick and agile decision making, manage the pressure on staff, and prioritise frontline services; interim political management arrangements were implemented.
- 3.2 Arrangements have been reviewed at regular and appropriate points during this period – April 2020, August 2020, December 2020, March 2021 and June 2021.
- 3.3 At its meeting in June 2021 the Council agreed, following a move to protection level zero, a phased approach to the resumption of committee meetings starting with executive committees and the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.
- 3.4 It was also agreed that Council meetings would remain virtual until physical distancing restrictions changed, when a report would be brought to Council to consider the reimplementation of physical Council meetings.
- 3.5 Since the Political Management Arrangements report was considered in June, the Scottish Government has made a series of announcements regarding the easing of restrictions and rates of infection.
- 3.6 The First Minister's statement on 13 July confirmed that Edinburgh, along with other areas of Scotland currently at Levels 1 and 2, would move to Level 0 on 19 July 2021, but with some modifications. The Scottish Government has shown a level of caution in their changing of Level 0 restrictions, noting that the lifting of all restrictions and mitigations at this point would potentially put the public at greater risk.
- 3.7 Over this period, Edinburgh has experienced its highest level of positive Covid-19 cases since the start of the pandemic. At the point of drafting of this report, levels of positive cases appear to have peaked and have started to fall.

- 3.8 On 3 August, the First Minister announced that Scotland would move to beyond Level 0 which includes the lifting of most of the remaining legally imposed restrictions – most notably, on physical distancing and limits to the size of social gatherings.
- 3.9 Council and committee meetings have been permitted to take place physically before 9 August 2021, but due to the success of virtual meetings and taking cognisance of the need to reduce gatherings of people, the Council had agreed not to meet until the City moved into level zero.
- 3.10 The First Minister also stated that the pandemic was not over and that some measures such as the use of face coverings within public buildings would remain mandatory. Significantly, the advice to work from home where possible would remain. As a result, elected members and officers would be able to access the office space in the City Chambers on the day of committee meetings (if attending the committee) but that a more general return to offices would not yet take place.

4. Main report

Executive Committees and Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

- 4.1 At its meeting in June 2021 the Council agreed, following a move to protection level zero, a phased approach to the resumption of meetings starting with executive committees and the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.
- 4.2 The first scheduled physical/hybrid meeting is the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 5 October 2021. The list and dates of further physical/hybrid committee meetings is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The technology in the Dean of Guild Court Room and the City Chambers has been upgraded to allow hybrid meetings to be held. As such there will be the option for members to be able to choose whether they attend virtually or in person. These are important upgrades which will allow a blended meeting approach to be taken permanently, increasing the flexibility for both elected members and officers without a detriment to the quality of the meeting.
- 4.4 As indicated in the June report, there are some practical issues that arise from hybrid meetings which means procedural matters can be more complicated and extra resource will be needed initially to ensure that the committee is sufficiently supported. Hybrid meetings will bring a greater level of complexity for the convener and clerk and Members will be asked to let the convener and the clerk know whether they will be attending remotely in advance of the meeting. This is to avoid situations where the numbers attending virtually mean that continuing with a hybrid meeting would create a risk of a two tier meeting and result in a sub-optimal meeting. As such, it is recommended that authority is delegated to the Proper Officer, in consultation with the relevant convener, to determine whether a meeting should revert back to virtual only in situations where the number of members attending mean a hybrid meeting would be too difficult to practically run and support.

- 4.5 The restrictions noted in the June Council report will remain. Specifically, officers presenting reports will attend meetings virtually. The only officers physically attending meetings will be 1-2 senior/lead officers, committee officers and an audio-visual technician. This will be reviewed when the work from home guidance is changed. Additionally, deputations will remain remote only and members of the public/press will be encouraged to attend meetings remotely.
- 4.6 In advance of the resumption of physical meetings, Committee Officers will draft a procedure note and meet with Conveners and Vice-Conveners to discuss how meetings will run in practice.

The City of Edinburgh Council

- 4.7 A one metre physical distancing rule is being applied by the Council in its buildings. Therefore, Council is unable to meet in the City Chambers with all 63 members whilst maintaining a physical distance of 1m.
- 4.8 It is recommended that physical Council meetings will only recommence when the Council removes all physical distancing requirements from its buildings.

Other Committees and Sub-Committees (as set out in the Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions)

- 4.9 As set out in the June report, one full cycle of executive committee meetings will be carried out to allow an assessment of when other committees and sub-committees (as set out in the Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions, listed at Appendix 2) can safely physically recommence.
- 4.10 It is imperative that a full assessment is carried out to ensure committees can work safely in this way and be assured we meet the specific legislative requirements of the quasi-judicial committees.
- 4.11 This report proposes that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Conveners and Vice-Conveners, to agree an appropriate time for further physical committee meetings to recommence, following the successful implementation of physical meetings of executive committees.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 In line with public health guidelines the resumption of physical meetings will commence on a phased basis.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Political management arrangements during this period will be contained within existing revenue budgets.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Political Management arrangements will be communicated to all stakeholders.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Interim Political Management Arrangements 2020 – Leadership Advisory Panel of 23 April 2020](#)
- 8.2 [Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee Arrangements and Remote Council Meetings – Policy and Sustainability Committee of 28 May 2020](#)
- 8.3 [Review of Political Management Arrangements 2020 – Policy and Sustainability Committee of 6 August 2020](#)
- 8.4 [Review of Political Management Arrangements December 2020 – City of Edinburgh Council of 10 December 2020](#)
- 8.5 [Review of Political Management Arrangements March 2021 – City of Edinburgh Council 11 March 2021](#)
- 8.6 [Review of Political Management Arrangements June 2021 – City of Edinburgh Council 24 June 2021](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 List of Physical Executive Committee and Governance Risk and Best Value Committee Meetings
- 9.2 List of Other Committees

Appendix 1 - List of Physical Executive Committee and Governance Risk and Best Value Committee Meetings

Date	Committee
5 October 2021	Policy and Sustainability
7 October 2021	Finance and Resources
12 October 2021	Education, Children and Families
14 October 2021	Transport and Environment
4 November 2021	Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work
9 November 2021	Governance, Risk and Best Value
11 November 2021	Transport and Environment
16 November 2021	Culture and Communities
PROPOSED REVIEW OF PHYSICAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS BY THE PROPER OFFICER	
18 November 2021	Finance and Resources Committee (Special Meeting)
30 November 2021	Policy and Sustainability
7 December 2021	Education, Children and Families
9 December 2021	Finance and Resources
14 December 2021	Governance, Risk and Best Value
NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW OF POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS	

Appendix 2 – List of Other Committees and Sub-Committees (as set out in the Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions)

Other Committees

Committee on Discretionary Rating Relief Appeals

Leadership Advisory Panel

Planning Committee

Pensions Committee

Personnel Appeals Committee

Placing in Schools Appeals Committee

Committee on Pupil Student Support

Recruitment Committee

Regulatory Committee

The City of Edinburgh Planning Local Review Body

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

Community Council Independent Complaints Panel

Sub-Committees

Development Management Sub-Committee (Parent: Planning Committee)

Licensing Sub-Committee (Parent: Regulatory Committee)

Pensions Audit Sub-Committee (Parent: Pensions Committee)

Property Sub-Committee (Parent: Finance and Resources Committee)

Special Sub-Committee on Adult Social Care (Parent: Culture and Communities Committee)

Sub-Committee on Standards for Children and Families (Parent: Education, Children and Families Committee)