

## Future Meetings

**Summary** – This report asks Members to consider whether future meetings of the Town Council and its Standing Committees should be resumed in the Town Hall

### 1. Background

As Members are aware, on 4 April 2020, the government introduced The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 which allows local councils to meet remotely. These regulations apply to meetings held before 7 May 2021.

Under this legislation, Marlborough Town Council has already been holding most of its meetings remotely and has adopted a protocol enabling this to be formalised.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has issued guidance on holding remote meetings. This is at **Appendix 1**.

Its current advice is that where councils can hold meetings remotely, they should, but where there is a need to hold a face to face meeting it should be managed within the social distancing and safer workplace guidance from government as well as guidance on the safe use of council buildings which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings#contents>

NALC is also currently running a consultation on remote meetings (ends 4 September)

A risk assessment will be needed and the reasons why the council has taken the decision to return to face-to-face meetings must be kept. NALC has produced a checklist to ensure that this decision is made in accordance with the relevant regulations and requirements. This is at **Appendix 2**.

### 2. Points to Note

- NALC recommends that facemasks are worn in enclosed public buildings and that windows are kept open where possible
- Sanitizer and masks would be provided
- Wandering microphones could not be used (though static ones are possible based on tables)
- Meetings would need to be held in the Assembly Room up to a maximum of 30 people (councillors, staff, press and public). It is suggested that the layout would be for councillors to be seated at one table in an arc, facing the Chair/Town Clerk. Members of the public would be seated behind the Cllrs with a view of the screen for the agenda papers
- The next Full Council takes place on Monday 7 September. A co-option will be taking place during this meeting too, requiring candidates to speak and answer questions



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- Members may consider that a sensible approach would be to trial a face-to-face meeting for a committee meeting (max. 9 Cllrs+staff+press+public)
- Hybrid meetings (as was trialled in the House of Commons) is not being used as yet by local councils due to expensive technical requirements
- It will be important to be as inclusive as possible especially to those who would like to attend but who are vulnerable or 'shielding'
- Councillors are reminded that this legislation only allows for remote meetings to 7 May 2021 – it will not be a permanent arrangement.

### **3. Financial Implications**

No costs have been sought associated with remote meetings.

### **Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that Members discuss the possibility of resuming face-to-face meetings in the Town Hall.

**Town Clerk**

**27 August 2020**