

COUNCIL

20TH JULY 2020

Statement - Appendix

Council From: Bowen, Mark
Sent: 20 July 2020 09:33
To: Smith, Colin, Cllr
Cc: Walton, Graham; Adetosoye, Ade
Subject: Re: Request for Statements at full council

Dear Cllr Smith

Thank you for your e-mail.

That is an interesting point and there is in my, view a distinction between what is necessary and what is desirable

Whilst I would acknowledge they are not perfect (and I don't want to tempt fate before tonight) virtual meetings have largely worked. Therefore on e.g. planning we have been able to keep public speaking rights and stream meetings so members of the public can still participate and now are able to watch the progress of the meeting from home without having to come into the civic centre. We have also managed to run a virtual licencing hearing . So from a practical perspective we can run meetings without the need to hold them on a face to face basis.

Therefore I would take need to mean circumstances where we can't rather than would prefer not to hold a virtual meeting e.g. a major IT or internet outage.

Virtual meetings don't allow members and the public to be physically present. Again it is not the position that members need to be in the same room to make decisions - the virtual meetups regulations actually mean they don't.

The second point goes to members of the public being present. As I have advised before our meetings are meetings held in public and not public meetings and again the regulations make it clear that allowing members of the public to hear/see proceedings is lawful and again we are looking at what is necessary and what may be desirable to deliver lawful meetings.

One point I was reflecting on over the weekend is how attendance at council meetings by members of the public sits with the rules on gatherings and performances and events and whilst the position is debatable even if it was necessary to hold a meeting that would say allow an objectors/applicant to attend but not allow general attendance in the gallery by supporters/opponents.

From a practical perspective the government's "road map" shows significant relaxations over the coming weeks and we should be good to get back to normal meetings (after the necessary risk assessments etc.) after the recess.

We have made some enquires of other Councils and again from what has been fed back virtual meetings/delegated decision making is still in place with no immediate plans to change

Kind regards

Mark

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Chief Executive's Department