

Report – Policy & Resources Committee

Report of Urgent Action Taken: 9 September 2021 meeting of the Court of Common Council – physical / formal meeting arrangements

To be presented on Thursday, 9th September 2021

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

SUMMARY OF ACTION TAKEN

1. In April 2021, the Court of Common Council resolved that all of its local and police authority meetings should be conducted on an informal basis for the coming period, in view of the ongoing Covid-19 related restrictions. This decision was taken bearing in mind the prohibitions on remote / virtual participation in formal meetings under relevant legislation and the impracticalities of holding formal meetings (particularly of the Court itself, given its size), with the Court also resolving to allow for virtual participation in non-local or police authority business more generally. These arrangements expire on 7 October.
2. On 5 July 2021, Her Majesty's Government announced that all Covid-related work from home guidance and social distancing restrictions were anticipated to come to an end as of 19 July 2021. The decision was, therefore, taken (on the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee) to hold the next meeting of Court of Common Council on 22 July as a formal, in-person meeting, but with committees and sub-committees continuing to operate on an informal basis, thereby facilitating virtual / remote participation for those meetings. The Covid-related situation could then be monitored over the summer recess, with a view to taking a longer-term decision in September.
3. The 22 July 2021 meeting of the Court subsequently proceeded on a physical basis and was held successfully, utilising various mitigations to help alleviate concerns associated with Covid (for example, an outdoor luncheon, spaced seating, reduced public attendance, and so on).
4. At that meeting, in response to a query around the format of the September Court meeting, hope was expressed that the Corporation would be in a position to repeat the arrangements but that there would need to be a "wait and see" approach over the coming weeks, depending on the situation with Covid and any subsequent response by the Government.
5. Consequently, the position was assessed during the month of August, with a view to determining arrangements and ensuring that Members were provided with

sufficient notice to make any requisite arrangements ahead of September's meeting.

6. In reviewing the position it was felt that, whilst the threat of Covid remained, there was no indication that the Government was likely to introduce any new restrictions and, indeed, the message of returning to the workplace was one they continue to promulgate.
7. Accordingly (and in keeping with the previous undertakings made to the Court), it was determined that September's Court meeting should proceed on a physical basis and be held in a similar manner to the July meeting, i.e. employing Covid mitigation measures so far as was practical, notwithstanding the removal of restrictions generally.
8. A decision was taken under urgency procedures in view of the summer recess and the need to provide sufficient notice for requisite arrangements to be made and the Court Summons published within statutory timeframes. The approval of the Court was, therefore, sought and obtained for the Court of Common Council meeting in September 2021 to proceed on a physical basis, as a formal meeting, and be live-streamed on YouTube for the benefit of the public, with steps also taken to alter the layout of the Great Hall to enable a greater degree of space between seats.

RECOMMENDATION

9. We **recommend** that the actions taken under urgency procedures be noted.

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 16th day of August 2021.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Chair, Policy & Resources Committee