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To: The Chair and Members
of the Procedures
Committee

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Date: 9 November 2020

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PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17th November, 2020

A meeting of the Procedures Committee is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am at Virtual meeting. To view and watch the meeting, the link will appear below in due course. to consider the following matters.

Phil Norrey
Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE

1 Apologies for absence

2 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020.

Electoral Divisions(s): All Divisions

3 Items requiring urgent attention

Items which in the opinion of the Chair should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

4 Council Meetings (1 January 2021 to 7 May 2021)

In line with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, the Council previously agreed to utilise those regulations to run remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of the year.

The regulations are in place until 7 May 2021, therefore the Committee is asked to consider continuing to conduct remote meetings until the expiry of the regulations, in line with the recent advice from the Director of Public Health.

Electoral Divisions(s): All Divisions

5 Notice Of Motion - Remote Meetings and the Future (Pages 1 - 6)

At the Council meeting on 23 July, Councillor Biederman submitted a Notice of Motion relating to the Council's future working practices relating to Member meetings.

'That Devon County Council make a commitment to holding more virtual meetings, briefings and task groups post Covid-19. They have clearly been very successful, have made a huge saving to the Council in budgetary terms and they also help in the Council's climate emergency aims, by reducing our carbon footprint. Council therefore asks the Procedures Committee to consider a Report on meetings in the future and what Committees, briefings and task groups could meet virtually.'

Report of the County Solicitor (CSO/20/18), responding to the Motion is attached.

Electoral Divisions(s): All Divisions

6 Devon Day and Patron Saints (Pages 7 - 12)

At the Procedures Committee on the 15th September 2020, the Leader asked that the Committee undertake a piece of research to review how the current date of the 4th June was chosen for Devon Day, the link to St Petrock's Day and also St Boniface. The Committee RESOLVED that the issue be investigated and a Report brought back to the Committee in due course.

Report of the County Solicitor relating to Devon Day, attached.

Electoral Divisions(s): All Divisions

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

NIL

PART II - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPT INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED

NIL

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Induction Loop available



CSO/20/18
Procedures Committee
17 November 2020

Future Meetings – Remote and Virtual Working

Report of the County Solicitor

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation

That Council be asked to

- (a) note the update Report around the current legislation, the Council's Virtual Meetings and Audio-Visual capabilities and Member meetings which permit remote attendance;
- (b) officers be asked to consider the most effective medium for holding a meeting in the future, supporting and encouraging remote meetings when it is appropriate to do so;
- (c) support those Members who wish to attend future meetings remotely, with relevant training and provision of necessary equipment; and
- (d) ask Procedures to undertake a further review of any legislative changes surrounding remote meetings and make any necessary changes to the Constitution and working practices.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 23 July, Councillor Biederman submitted a Notice of Motion relating to the Council's future working practices relating to Member meetings.

'That Devon County Council make a commitment to holding more virtual meetings, briefings and task groups post Covid-19. They have clearly been very successful, have made a huge saving to the Council in budgetary terms and they also help in the Council's climate emergency aims, by reducing our carbon footprint. Council therefore asks the Procedures Committee to consider a Report on meetings in the future and what Committees, briefings and task groups could meet virtually.'

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2. Background

- 2.1 This is not the first time the Procedures Committee has raised this matter. On the 10 September 2018 (Minute *45), Members discussed the use of Skype for various Council and Member meetings and asked Officers to explore the opportunities afforded by Skype and newer technologies and report back to the Committee in due course.
- 2.2 The Report was initially delayed due to a planned upgrade of the Committee Suite (including the Daw Room) and Council Chamber, where facilities for installing Skype were being undertaken, to help facilitate and enable more efficient working practices. The upgrade also enabled MS Teams which is in effect the new Skype to operate from the DAW room.
- 2.3 However, early in the year the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, after having an already massive impact globally, and of course there was a seismic shift in working practices in terms of how Local Authorities conducted their business. For Democratic Services, this meant holding remote meetings for the first time, which presented a number of challenges as well as a number of opportunities.

3. Legislation

- 3.1 Prior to 4th April 2020, there was no legal provision in England or Northern Ireland to allow Councillors to attend meetings remotely. The law did not have any concept of remote attendance, neither permitting nor forbidding it.
- 3.2 However, the Local Government Act 1972 provides that “no business shall be transacted at a meeting of a principal council unless at least one quarter of the whole number of members of the council are present”. This ruled out the possibility of holding meetings remotely in England.
- 3.3 Legislation states that in order to vote on decisions or recommendations a Member must physically be present at the meeting at which the matter is considered. Similarly, in order to be counted towards the quorum of a meeting a Member must physically be in attendance.
- 3.4 Up until April 2020, despite lobbying DCLG by other authorities to amend the legislation, allowing Members to be considered present at a meeting when attending virtually has remained unchanged.

- 3.5 On the 4th April 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Local Authorities received 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 for the first time permitted remote attendance.

4. Temporary Permission for Remote Attendance in Local Authority Meetings

- 4.1 The new Regulations were clear in permitting remote attendance. A meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place. The reference to a “place” includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations (internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers).
- 4.2 A Member ‘in remote attendance’ can attend the meeting as long as certain conditions are satisfied. These include that the Member is able to hear and be heard by the other Members in attendance. Also, being able to hear and be heard by any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting. The regulations would prefer a visual solution, but audio is sufficient.
- 4.3 This also relates to members of the public attending the meeting being heard, but preferably seen.
- 4.4 To be clear, the above caveats (in relation to Members of the authority and the public) includes a person who is attending by remote access.
- 4.5 The Regulations clarify that any reference to being “present” at a meeting includes being present through remote attendance, and a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place (including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers).

5. Current ICT Council Strategy

- 5.1 In common with many other organisations, COVID-19 had a significant impact on planned activities. However, it also allowed the Council to test some of the ambitions of the Strategy, particularly about enabling and supporting people to work remotely and investing in the right skills and tools.

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- 5.2 The Council is in the last six months of the delivery of the current ICT Roadmap (finishes in March 2021), and work is underway to finalise the new Digital & Technology Strategy which takes the Council into 2024 with services that are joined up and simple to use.
- 5.3 Digital is about more than just technology, it's about changing the way people live, connect, communicate and work and the Strategy complimented a wider range of activities happening across the Council.
- 5.4 Whilst the Strategy covers a number of themes reflecting the changing working patterns of many staff, it also looks to understand and support the new meeting experience and refresh "technology enabled meeting rooms" to ensure people can connect wherever they are based. This would include the completion of the migration from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams.

6. Current Facilities

- 6.1 A number of improvements have been made to the Committee rooms since 2019 including a complete technical upgrade to the DAW room with new voice enhancement suits being installed in the light fittings as before, the old scissor lift being replaced by a pole and new projector, new desktop microphones and Skype integrated into an easy to use panel that controls all the systems.
- 6.2 In the Clinton and Fortescue rooms, there is also a new voice enhancement and a new smart TV and projectors.
- 6.3 Skype / Teams has been enabled in the main Chamber.
- 6.4 Other enhancements are the ability to cast a devices screen onto any or all of the screens in the DAW room or the ability to connect a device using WiFi or through the use of a wired solution (cables).
- 6.5 100 new power sockets with USB ports have been installed in the main Council Chamber with additional power sockets currently being installed in the committee rooms.

7. Lobbying and Representations at a National Level

- 7.1 The Association of Democratic Services Officers has written to the Local Government Association with regard to the extension for remote meetings more generally beyond May 2021. A response to this letter is awaited.
- 7.2 Members will be updated in relation to any permanent change in the legislation and of course a Report would be brought to the Procedures Committee Members to determine future working practices.

8. What can be done in the Future

- 8.1 Whilst the outcome of the legislative changes are awaited, this would only apply to the Council's Committees formally constituted under the Local Government Act.
- 8.2 It is clear that there are a number of other meetings that could be conducted remotely in the future such as the regular one to one meetings between Officers and Members, Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny meetings, Masterclasses and Scrutiny Standing Overview Groups.
- 8.3 Work is also being prepared for some of the induction sessions for a new Council to be conducted in formats such as webinars, so people are able to view in their own time. This will not be appropriate for all induction training sessions, but for example for the departmental briefings, it could work well.
- 8.4 Formal Committee meetings can work well remotely, as has been demonstrated, but some Members miss the face to face interaction so a hybrid solution could strike the balance between those who prefer a face to face meeting and those who have less time to travel etc and give the option of a remote attendance for Councillors of the future.
- 8.5 From a Scrutiny perspective, task groups and spotlight reviews are more difficult. The activities of the group generally mean speaking to a range of people, many of whom are public, and the quality of the information does tend to come from building trust. There would need to be a balance struck between obtaining good quality data and evidence and using the best mechanism by which to do this.
- 8.6 Other service areas would be best placed to see what sort of meeting format works for them, depending on the context.

9. Financial considerations

- 9.1 Whilst the most important aspect of this conversation is open and transparent democratic processes, there could be considerable budgetary saving in the Members travel and expenses budget.
- 9.2 Given the geography of Devon, it is not uncommon for a round trip to be in excess of 100 miles, not to mention the time commitment required.
- 9.3 The current savings in Members expenditure April – October 2020 (the figures assuming that Members submit claims monthly in arrears)

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Narrative	Saving compared to Mth 1-7 19/20	Saving compared to 20/21 Mth 1-7 budget
Public Transport	£2,615	£4,319
Travel	£30,041	£32,809
Catering	£5,081	£7,000
Subsistence	£1,647	£486
Total	£39,384	£44,614

10. Risk management considerations

- 10.1 No unimaginable risks have been identified that have not been considered as part of the risk assessment process.

11. Equality Impact

- 11.1 A number of equality and environmental impacts could be identified. From an equalities perspective, the role of Councillor could be more appealing to those with caring responsibilities or those who are employed alongside their Councillor role. To allow more flexibility in Local Government may increase the attractiveness of the role with more candidates who are of working age and also women.

12 Environmental Impact

- 12.1 With the Council's sign up to the climate emergency to become carbon neutral by 2030, to permit remote attendances contributes to this agenda with significant reductions in travel and carbon emissions.

JAN SHADBOLT

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers:
None

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Devon Day and Patron Saints

Report of the County Solicitor

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Committee notes the mechanism by which St Boniface is honoured in the national church calendar on 5th June and the Council's ongoing support for the Boniface Link Association in working towards the adoption of St Boniface as the patron saint of Devon.

1. Summary

- 1.1 At Procedures Committee on 15 September 2020, Members agreed to consider the matter of Devon Day, how the current date of the 4th June was chosen, the link to St Petroc's Day and also St Boniface and asked that research was undertaken and a Report be brought back to the Committee at a later date.
- 1.2 This report provides information on the matters highlighted above.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 A saint is usually defined as a Christian who has shown heroic virtue in some respect. A 'saint', is a Christian whom the Church knows and agrees has lived and died faithfully. A 'canonized' saint, recognised by the Church, does not differ really from many unknown saints except in recognition and therefore, the feast of All Saints' Day (November 1st) honours not only the canonized saints, but the countless men and women of faith who died in obscurity.
- 2.2 The Roman Catholic Church has an elaborate, formal, canonization process for investigating claims of sanctity, yet for the Eastern Orthodox and Anglican Catholic Churches the process of canonization is much less formal. The Church of England has no mechanism for canonising saints and avoids the use of the prenominal title "Saint" with reference to uncanonised individuals. The practice of adopting patron saints goes back to the building of the first public churches in the Roman Empire.
- 2.3 The patron saints of churches, and more broadly of regions and countries, have generally been chosen because of some connection of that saint to that place – (preached the Gospel and / or died there / relics transferred there). Patron saints tend to differ in importance from the general calendar of saints because they are, or become, cultural icons as well as religious figures.

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3. Saint Petroc & Devon Day

- 3.1 County days are relatively recent observances, formed to celebrate the cultural heritage of a particular county. For example, Norfolk Day, a 2018 project between BBC Radio Norfolk and the Eastern Daily Press, is now held on 27 July. Hampshire Day was held for the first on July 15 last year to provide an annual opportunity for people across the county to share in celebrating the county's history, traditions, and the diverse culture.
- 3.2 Devon Day is currently celebrated on 4th June and is linked with St Petroc; one of the three Patron Saints of Cornwall; along with St Piran (5th March) and St Michael (8th May).
- 3.3 St Petroc ministered throughout Dumnonia, which included Kernow (Cornwall), and parts of Dewnans (Devon), Somerset and Dorset. He is associated with a monastery at Padstow, which is named after him (Pedroc-stowe, or 'Petrock's Place'), where he established a community of his followers; and then became a hermit at Bodmir Moor, where he again attracted followers and was known for his miracles.
- 3.4 He was responsible for founding a number of churches and monasteries right across the south-west, with several important clusters found around Barnstaple in North Devon and the Devon villages of Petrockstowe and Newton St Petroc which are named for him. Petroc was also strongly associated with Exeter, for most of its history the most important, richest and most pious city in all of Devon. His association with these important towns in the county established his firm presence in Devon's heritage. There are dedications to him at several key churches in the county and a strong focus on his cult around Torridge, north-west Devon, along the Cornish border.
- 3.5 With Saint Piran and Saint Michael, he is one of the patron saints of Cornwall and was described by Thomas Fuller as "the captain of Cornish saints". His feast day is 4 June and his major shrine is at St Petroc's Church in Bodmin.
- 3.6 The idea for Devon Day began in 2014 when one of Visit Devon's directors, along with BBC Radio Devon, put forward the idea of having an official date in the calendar to celebrate Devon. The idea was to promote the best of Devon for the whole day in the hope of getting the County trending on social media, and is a celebration of everything great about Devon - its towns & cities, farms and countryside, the Devon food & drink, moorlands & coastlines as well as the characters and people who live in Devon.
- 3.7 The pioneering force behind the Devon flag, the Devon Flag Group, had also suggested several significant county dates when the flag might be raised, primarily the Feast Day of Saint Petroc's on June 4th and this date has since been acknowledged and commemorated by Devon residents as Devon Day.
- 3.8 Since becoming an official day in 2016, Devon Day has attracted a massive online following, with people sharing their love for the County on social media. In 2017, more than 2.4million Twitter followers saw #DevonDay and in 2018, the subject was trending on Twitter nationally for more than eight hours.

4. Saint Boniface as Patron Saint of Devon

- 4.1 St Boniface was born in the Devon town of Crediton in Anglo-Saxon England around 675AD and was a leading figure in the Anglo-Saxon mission to the Germanic parts of the Frankish Empire and is credited with bringing Christianity to Germany. For this, some historians call him the “First European” and he is still revered in Germany to this day. Boniface believed that church and state should work together and was dedicated to a peaceful co-existence among the peoples with whom he worked.
- 4.2 Boniface was killed by a mob in Frisia in 754 and his remains returned to Fulda, where he had built an abbey. He is venerated as a saint in the Christian church and became the patron saint of Germania, known as the ‘Apostle of the Germans’.
- 4.3 Saint Boniface’s feast day is celebrated on 5 June and a statue stands in the grounds of Mainz Cathedral. The UK National Shrine to St Boniface is at the Catholic church in Crediton. There is also an aisle dedicated to him at Crediton Parish Church.
- 4.4 Boniface has had an enormous impact on English and European history, far beyond the simple conversion of people to Christianity. His guidance of the early church in Germany, his establishment of structures which allowed it to co-exist with monarchy were massively important, and the educational and literary influence from his monasteries and churches in his lifetime and over the next centuries was very significant. He is described as the Apostle of Germany and is greatly revered in Holland.
- 4.5 Boniface has been described by eminent historians as “The greatest Englishman of all time” and “the Englishman who has had a greater influence on the history of Europe than any other Englishman”, however in England he is not greatly known about.
- 4.6 The idea of St. Boniface as Patron Saint of Devon originated with The Boniface Link Association who suggested that St. Boniface could be adopted as Patron Saint of Devon and his feast day, 5th June, should also be celebrated as Devonshire Day. The Boniface Link Association (Crediton) believe that celebrating St. Boniface as Devon’s patron saint could celebrate its Saxon heritage, to encourage tourism and support the economy.
- 4.7 In February 2019, a motion was brought to Full Council by Councillor Way asking for the adoption of St Boniface as the Patron St of Devon. It was agreed by Cabinet on 13 March 2019 and later resolved by Council in May 2019, that Council:
 - (a) *note the work of the Boniface Link Association (Crediton) and also the mechanism by which Boniface is honoured in the national church calendar on 5th June;*
 - (b) *note the anticipated announcement by the Bishop of Exeter about an initiative that honours and commemorates St Boniface; and*
 - (c) *supports the work of the Boniface Link Association in working towards the adoption of St Boniface as the patron saint of Devon and in line with the letters of support received from the Bishop of Plymouth, Bishop of Exeter, Senior Pastor at*

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Crediton Congregational Church, Crediton Methodist Church and Rector of the Orthodox Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias, also lends it support to the Notice of Motion.

- 4.8 The idea of Boniface as Patron Saint of Devon has also gained the support of all the main churches and letters of support have been received from the Bishop of Plymouth, Bishop of Exeter, Senior Pastor at Crediton Congregational Church, Crediton Methodist Church and Rector of the Orthodox Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias.
- 4.9 In 2019, the Bishop of Exeter also introduced a new initiative in the name of St Boniface. The Company of St Boniface honours people who have made a substantial contribution to the life of the church in Devon. Up to six Companions of St Boniface would be admitted each year. Last year there was a service of investiture at Exeter Cathedral in September at which the recipients were presented with a special medal designed by Devon priest and artist Father Andrew Johnson.

5. Designation of a Patron Saint

- 5.1 Having sought clarification from the Diocese of Exeter, there is no formal system within the Church of England for the designation of a patron saint. The last time this happened was in the Middle Ages when the King, in response to the returning crusaders, declared St George to be the patron saint of England thereby displacing St Edward the Confessor, the Saxon King buried in Westminster Abbey. The dedication of individual churches to a saint is the decision of the Bishop, normally in response to public acclaim.
- 5.2 In the case of Devon there has been no official patron saint, however in some quarters St Petroc has been titled as such, partly as a result of Devon's shared Celtic heritage with Cornwall and the joined histories of the Dioceses of Exeter and Truro.
- 5.3 The Diocese of Exeter advised that they are proud to have many outstanding Christians representing Devon, some of whom are commemorated in the official calendar of the Church of England. Notwithstanding the tide of enthusiasm which began in Crediton, wanting St Boniface to be more widely recognised, there is no desire within the church to side-line St Petroc or any of the other saints associated with Devon. Instead they feel it represents a golden opportunity to celebrate a person of courage and integrity who gave his life for the Gospel. In a secular age which is often antipathetic to Christianity the initiative to accord Boniface this status is something that should be embraced rather than undermined.
- 5.4 In a joint statement, the Rt Rev Robert Atwell, Bishop of Exeter and Rt Rev Mark O'Toole, Bishop of Plymouth, said:

"We are delighted to champion the groundswell of support to acclaim St Boniface as patron saint of Devon. At a time when our links with Europe are under scrutiny, it is good to honour our historic, spiritual links and to celebrate the faith and courage of this extraordinary man of whom Devon can rightly be proud."

6. Government Policy

- 6.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published guidance in July 2019 on celebrating the historic counties of England which includes a list of all the county days. The guidance highlights that the Government “is committed to seeing a greater level of activity to celebrate the historic counties, but believes local approaches must be locally-led if they are to be truly owned by communities and therefore fully effective.”

More information, including a list of County Days, can be found on the government website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/celebrating-the-historic-counties-of-england/celebrating-the-historic-counties-of-england>

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council recognises the importance of celebrating the history and traditions of this county through Devon Day and also notes the mechanism by which St Boniface is honoured in the national church calendar on 5th June. The Council supports the work of the Boniface Link Association in working towards the adoption of St Boniface as the patron saint of Devon, but also recognises the popularity and strong branding of the 4 June as Devon Day, as evidenced on social media.

8. Financial considerations

- 8.1 No financial implications have been identified

9. Legal considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific legal considerations.

10. Equality, Environmental Impact and Public Health Considerations.

- 10.1 No equality, environmental, climate change impact or public health implications have been identified.

11. Risk management considerations

- 11.1 No risks have been identified.

JAN SHADBOLT

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers: None

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All reports are published on the Council's [Democracy in Devon website](#).

