



City of Westminster

Report to full Council

Date:	16 September 2020
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Changes to the programme of Full Council Meetings 2020/2021
Wards Affected:	N/A
Policy Context:	Management of the Council
Financial Summary:	There are no financial implications
Report of:	Tasnim Shawkat, Director of Law

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report concerns proposals to amend the programme of meetings for full council for the current municipal year to reflect the changes to the business and financial planning round for 2021/2022 that have arisen as a consequence of Covid-19.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That full council agree the following changes to the Programme of Council Meetings for 2020-2021:
- (i) That the extraordinary meeting (Budget) programmed to be held on Wednesday 11 November 2020 now be held as an ordinary council meeting for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.3 below and
 - (ii) That the meeting on the 3 March 2021 be amended to an extraordinary meeting to receive the Leader's Speech and consider budget proposals for 2021/2022.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 Following recommendations from the General Purposes Committee the full council agreed last year to bring forward the receipt of the Leader's Speech and its consideration of budget proposals for the following fiscal year from March to November each year. It also agreed minor adjustments to the council meeting

procedure rules to reflect these changes. The agreed changes followed an approach broadly pursued on a trial basis over the two previous years.

- 3.2 The rationale for these changes was that the approval of the budget for the next fiscal year at an earlier stage allowed for departments to better plan on a full year basis for the following fiscal year. Any changes which impacts on the budget approved in the autumn is to be reported to the Cabinet in the following February and then to the full council in early March when the formal Council Tax Resolution is to be determined.

Leader's Speech and Budget Setting Process for 2021-22

- 3.3 On the 13 July 2020 Cabinet considered an update on the council's medium-term financial position in order to inform the business and financial planning round for 2021/22. The report outlined that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the council and the City of Westminster. The paper assessed the current financial impact result of Covid-19 and reviewed other key financial assumptions together with national and local policy issues that the Council need to consider in making its plans for the period. The report also set out an approach for the budget process that takes account of these and the requirement to identify savings options that fit within the overall policy and financial framework aligning resources to the Council's key policy objectives set out in the City for All. It was recognised that the current financial and economic conditions are continually changing as well as the government response to this.
- 3.4 Cabinet agreed the budget process approach set out in the report whereby the budget proposals for 2021/22 and the medium-term financial plan would be developed and scrutinised over the autumn and winter before being presented to full council for determination in March next year.
- 3.5 To facilitate this full council will need to agree to change the programme of council meetings for 2020/21 so that the extraordinary budget meeting scheduled for the 11 November reverts to an ordinary meeting and that the meeting scheduled for the 3 March 2021 is amended to receive the Leader's Speech and consider budget proposals for the following fiscal year.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 No additional financial implications arise from the proposals set out in this report.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Programme of Council Meetings allows the council to take decisions in accordance with statutory requirements.
- 5.2 The function of calculating the City Council's budget requirement and the City Council's element of the Council Tax, and the function of setting the Council Tax,

are the responsibility of the full Council. The formal Council Tax resolution may only be adopted once the relevant information from the precepting authorities has been received. Section 30(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the council has to set its budget before 11 March in the financial year preceding the one in respect of which the budget is set

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The proposals in this report have been circulated to the Party Whips who have indicated their support for them.
- 6.2 Consultation on the proposals has also been undertaken with the General Purposes Urgency Sub-Committee by way of the written urgency procedures who also have expressed support for them.
- 6.3 No outstanding issues remain as a result of this consultation.

If you have any queries about this report please contact Reuben Segal:

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None