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Date of Document	18/06/20
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Document Title	Changes to Standing Orders - Remote Participation in Council and Committee Meetings

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This report was processed in accordance with COVID-19 Emergency Recess Procedures, and was approved by: Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan

Authorised By	Lel Gillingwater/Jill Totney
Designation	Team Mgr - Democratic & Licensing
Date	23/06/20

For Office Use Only:	
Library Reference	74/20
Date Received	23/06/20
Bulletin	Jun20

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council (COVID-19 Emergency Recess Procedures)

MEETING DATE:

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Changes to Standing Orders – Remote Participation in Council and Committee Meetings

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval of changes to Standing Orders to allow Members to participate remotely in meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub-Committees.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked to approve the proposed changes to Standing Orders, as set out in Appendix 1, which would allow Members to participate remotely in meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub-Committees by way of the Council's proposed digital meeting facility.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has resulted in significant changes to how the Council conducts its business. At its Special Meeting of 17 March 2020, the Council agreed to go into emergency recess, and to follow specific procedures put in place by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Political Group Leaders, which would allow necessary business to be undertaken.
- 3.2 Since the meeting of 17 March, it has become increasingly clear that it will be some time before normal Council business can resume. Officers have therefore been considering ways of ensuring the continuity of the democratic process. A number of meetings, including Planning Committee, LRB and MRAC, have been held using Skype for Business. Feedback on the use of this technology at these meetings has been largely positive; however, this technology has its limitations; for example, dealing with large numbers of participants and providing

public access to meetings is not easy to manage, and only those with access to Skype for Business can use the video-conferencing function. Other means of technology for use in the medium/long-term are now being procured with a view to introducing a new digital meeting facility in the autumn of 2020. A separate report will inform Members of progress as regards the procurement, rollout and functionality of this new facility, and associated training will be provided for users in due course.

- 3.3 The Council's Standing Orders do not currently provide for remote participation in meetings. In anticipation of any modification to the Emergency Recess arrangements in the autumn of 2020, and the introduction of a new digital meeting facility, changes to Standing Orders will be required. The proposed changes are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.4 The proposed changes will allow for a flexible approach to meeting participation in the future, in that Elected Members, Council officers, the press and members of the public will be able to 'attend' meetings remotely.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 On the modification to the COVID-19 Emergency Recess arrangements, changes to Standing Orders are required before any remote participation in Council and committee meetings can take place.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – None
- 6.2 Personnel – None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 East Lothian Council's Standing Orders

7.2 Report to East Lothian Council on 17 March 2020 – COVID-19
Emergency Recess Procedures

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DATE	1 June 2020

Proposed Changes to Standing Orders in Enable Remote Participation in Council, Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings

SO 6.3 (new provision)

Meetings may take place by way of the digital meeting facility only (that is, there will be no physical attendance). In such cases, Councillors and relevant officers will be advised of this in advance of the meeting date.

SO 7.2 iii (amended)

[The Convener may take any of the following courses of action against any Councillor disregarding the authority of the Convener, obstructing the meeting or conducting him/herself offensively:]

suspend the Councillor for the remainder of the meeting and direct him/her to leave the Chamber, in which case the Councillor concerned shall leave the Chamber immediately, or, if the Councillor is participating remotely, his/her access to the digital meetings facility will be suspended for the remainder of the meeting.

SO 7.6 ii (amended)

Subject to the Convener's effective management of the meeting, there will be a 30-minute break after approximately three hours of sitting for a physical meeting, and after approximately two hours of sitting for a meeting being conducted through the Council's digital meeting facility.

SO 10.2 (new provision)

For meetings where the Council's digital meeting facility is in use, all votes will be taken by roll call.