

<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>			
<b>MEETING OF THE:</b>	<b>AUTHORITY</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>21<sup>ST</sup> AY 2020</b>	<b>REPORT NO:</b>	<b>CFO/022/20</b>
<b>PRESENTING OFFICER</b>	<b>ACTING MONITORING OFFICER</b>		
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	<b>RIA GROVES</b>	<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>KELLY KELLAWAY – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER, RIA GROVES</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	<b>GEORGIA QUINN – TRAINEE SOLICITOR</b>		
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS- REMOTE MEETINGS</b>		

<b>APPENDICES:</b>	<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	<b>AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE RULES</b>
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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To request that Members approve the Amendments to Standing Orders attached as Appendix A, which have been drafted in response to *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local MFRA Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020*, which provide for remote meetings of local authorities.

### **Recommendation**

2. That Members;
  - (a) Note the implications of the *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local MFRA Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020*
  - (b) Approve the Amendments to Standing Orders and Procedure Rules contained within Appendix A.

### **Introduction and Background**

3. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ('Remote Meetings Regulations') were enacted under s.78 of Coronavirus 2020 and came into force on 4th April 2020.

4. The Remote Meetings Regulations are applicable to local authorities and as such the Authority with the intention to permit local authorities to continue to hold meetings remotely; and enable the democratic decision making process within local authorities, to continue safely in the current pandemic situation. These Remote Meetings Regulations apply to meetings held before 7th May 2021.
5. The Authority has the provision to hold such meetings and at such hour and on such days and alter the frequency, move or cancel meetings without requirements for further notice. Therefore, the Authority can make changes to their meeting arrangements with immediate effect. As the Remote Meetings Regulations are silent on notice of the meetings it is advised the Authority continues to adhere to the same advanced publication of reports as normal.
6. The Remote Meetings Regulations allows for meetings to be held without the need for all or indeed any of the Members physically present in a room. As such, the “place” at which meetings of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority and its Committees is held, can now be a “virtual” location, rather than a physical location on Authority premises.
7. Members being determined as ‘in attendance’ at a meeting remotely must satisfy set criteria which is at the very least being able to hear and be heard (and where practicable see and be seen) by other Members with members of the public being able to hear the conduct of the meeting.
8. The Remote Meetings Regulations stipulate that remote access for members of the public and press; and Members who are not attending to participate in the meeting, also need to be provided through some means, in order to meet the requirement for local authority meetings to be accessible to the public.
9. The Remote Meetings Regulations also permit appointments normally made at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to continue until the next AGM or until a time as determined by an Authority. This provides Councils with an option to hold annual meetings remotely or in person when the restrictions are lifted or continue until the next AGM in 2021. If an AGM is delayed all positions remain as they are currently in place. As Authority Members are appointed by their own respect constituent council the respective Councils decisions may impact upon the Authority.
10. The Remote Meetings Regulations automatically override any existing Procedure Rules or Standing Orders within the Authority’s constitution or any other governing rules in place. It is however considered good practice to incorporate the effect of the Remote Meetings Regulations within the Authority’s constitution and as such the recommended amendment to standing orders and procedure rules is contained within Appendix A for Members to consider adopting.

11. The Amendments to Standing Orders should be read in conjunction with Authority's Procedural Standing Orders contained within Authority's Constitution. Wherever there is conflict with the Constitution, these temporary Amendments to Standing Orders takes precedence in regards to any procedure relating to any Meetings of the Authority or its Committees.
12. It is proposed to Members that the Amendments to Standing Orders, and Procedure Rules will be kept under consideration by the Monitoring Officer and any changes that would be pertinent would be proposed to Members..

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### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

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13. In order to fully comply with the Regulations, every effort will be made to ensure that remote meetings of the Authority and its Committees, are as accessible as possible to both the public and Members; and additional support and guidance will be provided wherever necessary.

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### **Staff Implications**

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14. The current situation and introduction of the Regulations, has resulted in a change of working for both Officers and Members.
15. There has been a significant impact on staff resources in preparing for remote meetings, however it is anticipated that the demands on staff will return to normal once Officers and Members are more familiar with the operation of remote meetings.

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### **Legal Implications**

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16. The legal implications are contained within this report.

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### **Financial Implications & Value for Money**

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17. Any costs associated with the introduction of remote Authority meetings, can be contained within existing budgets.
18. However, there will be some small savings in terms of Members Allowance claims, associated with the introduction of remote meetings, as Members will not be travelling to attend meetings.

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### **Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications**

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19. The introduction of remote Authority Meetings will have a slight positive impact with regards to the environment and a reduction in risk, associated with Members no longer being required to travel to attend meetings

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Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

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20. The introduction of the Remote Meetings Regulations and proposed amendments to the Standing Orders ensures that the decisions and actions of the Authority remain accountable, transparent and that the democratic governance has not been impacted. in order to ensure the delivery of the Authority’s Mission of “Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters”.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

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