



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Governance and Audit Committee

Tuesday, 24 September 2024

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles,
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Proposed amendment to the Council's Constitution – method of voting at public meetings

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To consider an amendment to the Council's Constitution regarding the method of voting used by Members during public meetings of the Council.

Recommendations

The Governance and Audit Committee recommends to Full Council that the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Constitution be amended, as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report, to allow use of the electronic voting system in the Council Chamber.

Decision Information

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? | No |
| What are the relevant corporate priorities? | Effective council |
| Which wards are impacted? | (All Wards) |

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from this report, which seeks to introduce another method for the recording of votes at the Council's public meetings, utilising technology which already exists in the Council Chamber.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. Paragraph 15.3 of the Council Procedure Rules at Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Council's Constitution currently prescribes that votes at the Council's meetings shall be taken by means of a show of hands for, against and abstention.
- 2.2. The Council Chamber is equipped with an electronic voting system whereby Members can press a button next to their respective microphone to indicate whether they are for, against or abstaining from a proposal. The results of this vote can then be displayed on the screen in the Council Chamber.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The Council has previously used the electronic system in the Council Chamber to facilitate voting at its meetings, however, a decision was taken in 2020 to cease its use. The current administration is keen to re-introduce its use and therefore seeks to amend the Constitution in order that it can be used at the Council's meetings in the future.
- 3.2. It is considered that use of this system will be more open and transparent in terms of clearly displaying the outcome of votes taken in the Council Chamber, both to those in the Chamber itself as well as to those watching the meeting live or via a recording of the meeting. Additionally, it would speed up the process of recorded

votes which can be time consuming given that each Members' name currently needs to be read out in order that they can indicate whether they are for, against or abstaining from a proposal. Use of the system would enable all Members to indicate their vote at the same time with the results immediately available for viewing on the screen.

- 3.3. The Governance and Audit Committee is therefore invited to consider making a recommendation to Full Council which amends paragraph 15.3 of the Council Procedure Rules to read:

“Unless otherwise provided by legislation or in these Council Procedure Rules, the vote on any motion or amendment proposed at any meeting of Full Council shall be taken by means of a show of hands for, against and abstention **or by using the electronic voting system in the Council Chamber. The person presiding the meeting will determine the most appropriate means of facilitating votes**”.

- 3.4. The bold text above denotes additions made to the existing procedure rule.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 To maintain the existing arrangements of limited voting to a show of hands.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. To make use of the technology already available in the Council Chamber, provide more flexibility as to how voting can be facilitated at meetings of the Council and ensure more openness and transparency in respect of the result of votes in presenting votes cast for, against and abstentions on the screen.