

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Standing Orders Amendment (Due to Council Chamber Closure July- August 2026)</b>
<b>Committee Submitted To:</b>	<b>Corporate Policy and Resources Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>28 April 2026</b>
<b>For Decision/For Information</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>To be discussed In Committee</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Themes	Improvement & Innovation
Outcome	A Sustainable, Accessible Environment
Lead Officer	Democratic and Central Services Manager

<b>Estimated Timescale for Completion</b>	
Date to be Completed	TBC

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>YES/NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>YES/NO</b>

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	<i>Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.</i>		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:



Assessment (DPIA)	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
----------------------	---------------------------------	--------	-------

## **1.0 Background**

The purpose of this report is to consider and approve amendments to Standing order 2 – Time and Place of Meetings, to ensure business continuity and contingency planning in the long term, and in the short term, whilst repairs are carried out to the roof of the Council Chamber, during Summer 2026.

## **2.0 Standing Order 2 – Time and Place of Meetings**

2.1 Council Standing Orders as at March 2026 currently state the following regarding time, place and form of meetings:

2.2 *Standing Order 2. Time and Place of Meetings*

*(1) The Annual Meeting and other meetings of the Council shall normally be held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, or in remote or hybrid format, except where otherwise fixed by statute or by special summons.*

*(2) That meetings of the full Council be held in person, with provision for remote attendance by Council staff and external consultants, and that Committee meetings be hybrid.*

2.3 Advice has been sought from Council's legal team and their opinion is that the wording of Standing Order 2(1) and 2(2) could benefit from some amendment. This amendment could also deal with exceptional circumstances where contingency arrangements are required, for example, works to the Council Chamber

## **3.0 Cloonavin Council Chamber Repairs**

3.1 Repairs to the Chamber roof in Cloonavin have been needed for some time due to leakage and potential damage to Chamber equipment in the aftermath of Storm Eowyn in January 2025. A time when council meetings are in recess is considered to be the optimum time to minimise or avoid disruption to conducting council business.

3.2 It was agreed to start work on the Chamber roof straight after the June 30<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. The timescale for completion is approximated 6 weeks. It is intended to have completed works ready for the Council meeting in September 2026.



3.3 There are two meetings scheduled during this period, 4th August Council Meeting and 26th August Planning Meeting. The Council Chamber will be unavailable during this period of repair work.

#### **4.0 Revised Standing Orders**

4.1 A recommended amendment to Standing Order 2(1) and 2(2) dealing with the issues raised and to ensure business continuity and contingency planning is set out below for consideration.

#### **4.2 Standing Order 2. Time and Place of Meetings Recommended Amendment**

*(1) The Annual Meeting and other meetings of the Council shall normally be held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber and shall be held in person, except where otherwise fixed by statute or by special summons, with provision for remote attendance by Council staff, members of a deputation and external consultants.*

*(2) In exceptional circumstances the Annual Meeting and other meetings of the Council may be held in remote or hybrid format, or in a location other than the Council Chamber.*

*(3) Committee meetings shall be held in hybrid format. Sub committees shall be held in remote or hybrid format.*

*(4) In exceptional circumstances Committee meetings may be held in remote format.*

*(5) Exceptional circumstances shall include but not limited to, Acts of God, civil unrest, adverse weather, operational impediments and public health.*

#### **4.3 Capacity Considerations**

With regards to the meetings of 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2026 Council Meeting and 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2026 Planning Meeting, it is recommended that these be held in Riada House, Ballymoney, during the repair phase of Cloonavin Chamber.

The Chamber in Riada House is at full capacity at 25 (9 top table, 16 councillors) seats, therefore, there is consequently a need for both meetings to be hybrid in order for Council to be fully inclusive in the democratic process.

It is further recommended Members consider (via Party Leads) managing requests for 'in person' attendance at these meetings due to space constraints in Riada House. A suggestion is a possible maximum number 'in person' attendees per party with others attending online, if required



#### **4.4 ICT Considerations**

ICT has tested Riada House for use during this period. The infrastructure is in place to facilitate the meeting with some minor adjustments.

There will be adjustments to the technology (microphones and cameras). Training and/or demonstrations can be provided by ICT.

#### **5.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that

- 5.1 Members note the update regarding Chamber closure during July and August to facilitate essential repair works, as set out in Section 3, and
- 5.2 Approve the amendment to Standing Orders as outlined in Section 4.2, note the current capacity limitations of Riada House Chamber, Section 4.3, and agree a mechanism to facilitate the Council meeting, in a hybrid format