



## OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

### APPROVAL OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR ABSENCES

#### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

The purpose of this report is to request that the County Council considers whether to agree that County Councillors David Lewis (Camberley West) and Mark Sugden (Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott) continue to be absent from Council meetings by reason of ill health.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, a Member ceases to hold that office if he/she has not attended a meeting for a period of six consecutive months, unless the failure to attend is due to a reason approved by the authority during that six months.

The last meeting that David Lewis (Camberley West) attended was a meeting of the County Council in May 2024. He has been unable to attend any formal meetings in person since then due to ill health.

For that reason, the County Council is requested to agree that Councillor David Lewis (Camberley West) continue to be absent from meetings while maintaining membership of the Council during his period of ill health. This situation will be monitored regularly and reviewed in May 2025.

The last meeting that Mark Sugden (Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott) attended was a meeting of the County Council in July 2024. In line with medical advice, Councillor Sugden has been unable to attend any formal meetings in person since then but has been an active participant in online meetings.

As it stands, there is no provision for councillors' attendance to be formally counted for virtual meetings, therefore the County Council is requested to agree that Mark Sugden (Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott) continue to be absent from meetings while maintaining membership of the Council during his period of ill health. This situation will be monitored regularly and reviewed in May 2025.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Councillor David Lewis (Camberley West) and Councillor Mark Sugden (Claygate, Hinchley Wood and Oxshott) continue to be absent from meetings until May 2025 by reason of ill health. The Council looks forward to welcoming them back in due course.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER:**

Section 85(i) of the Local Government Act 1972 states “if a member of a Local Authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of the Authority, they shall unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period cease to be a Member of the Council.”

Attendance in an official capacity at a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the council or at any meeting of a joint committee or other such body discharging functions of the council or at any meeting as a representative of the council is deemed to be a ‘meeting of the council’.

If after six months from the date of a member’s last attendance to attend any meeting, the council has not approved the absence then the member as a result of the operation of law ceases to be a member of the council from that date. The six months runs from the date of the member’s last attendance and approval must be given within that six month period.

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### **Lead/Contact Officers:**

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### **Sources/background papers:**

None

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