692. Motion: Review of the Process for Considering Councillors' Apologies for Absence

It was proposed by Cllr Crayford, seconded by Cllr Saunders, and on being put to the meeting it was RESOLVED: This Council notes that: • At present, the Council is asked to vote on whether to accept apologies for absence from councillors, often without being provided with any information regarding the reason for the absence. • As a consequence, councillors are frequently expected to make a decision without sufficient information to enable meaningful consideration or discussion. • The Council recognises that some reasons for absence may be personal or confidential and should be treated with appropriate sensitivity and respect. • However, the current process does not strike an appropriate balance between protecting legitimate confidentiality and enabling councillors to make informed democratic decisions. • Unlike principal authorities, where legislation places time limits on councillors' attendance before a seat may become vacant, there is currently no equivalent statutory time limit governing attendance at town and parish councils. This means councillors can, in some circumstances, remain absent from meetings for extended periods whilst continuing to represent their residents. • Residents are entitled to expect transparency and accountability regarding the attendance of those elected to represent them. Council therefore resolves to:

1. Refer this matter to the Policy and Resources Committee.

2. Request that the Committee reviews the Council's existing process for considering apologies for absence.

3. Develop and recommend a revised procedure that provides greater transparency and enables councillors to make informed decisions, whilst continuing to respect confidential or sensitive personal information where appropriate and ensuring their rights under GDPR are not breached.

4. Present any proposed amendments to Council for consideration and adoption.