

TITLE	Approval of a Period of Absence from Meetings by Councillor Gary Cowan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 22 February 2024
WARD	Arborfield Ward;
DIRECTOR	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That Councillor Gary Cowan remain in office as Member for Arborfield Ward and continue to represent his constituents.

RECOMMENDATION

Council is recommended to:

- 1) note that Councillor Gary Cowan has not been able to attend meetings in-person of the Council due to ill-health since his attendance at Council on 21 September 2023;
- 2) approve Councillor Gary Cowan's non-attendance at meetings of the Council due to ill-health until his current term of office ends in May 2024, pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Regulations state that where a Council Member fails to attend any meeting of the relevant Authority, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, subject to certain exceptions, they cease to be a Member of the Authority. However, the Authority can approve the Member's non-attendance for specified reasons.

This report asks Council to approve Councillor Gary Cowan's non-attendance on the grounds of ill-health.

Background

1. Under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 if a Member fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of the Council or as a representative of the Council on an Outside Body they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the Council before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority.
2. Due to ill-health Councillor Gary Cowan has not been able to attend any Council or Committee meetings since his attendance at the Council meeting on 21 September 2023. Councillor Cowan has advised that he is uncertain as to whether his health will permit him to attend any meetings in the upcoming months. A request is therefore put forward to Council to approve an extension to

the six month rule to enable Councillor Cowan to remain in office. If this request is not approved Councillor Cowan will cease to be a member of the Council on 22 March 2024.

3. Council is asked to give approval to Councillor Cowan’s non-attendance by reason of ill-health until his current term of office ends in May 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0		Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0		Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0		Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
There are no financial implications related to this report.

Cross-Council Implications
There are no cross-Council implications related to this report.

List of Background Papers
Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972

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