

# Multi-Location Meetings Policy



## Cardiff Council 2021

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# Foreword

To be drafted:

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# Overview

## Background

1. Arrangements were first made to progress “remote meetings” in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, however this required at least 30% of the attendees to be in attendance in person and was rarely used. At the outset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, the Welsh Government introduced the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 which established a framework for Councils to convene remote meetings for all attendees throughout 2020 and part of 2021.
2. With the implementation of “The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Welsh Government has provided Councils the power and freedom to convene multi-location meetings which will enable greater accessibility and public participation in local government decision making.

## Legal Requirements

3. Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (‘the 2021 Act’), Part 3, Chapter 4, local authorities are required to:
  - a. Broadcast full Council meetings (with effect from May 2022).
  - b. Make and publish arrangements to ensure that all Council, Committee and Cabinet meetings may be attended remotely (i.e. enabling persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting) – also referred to as ‘multi-location meetings’.
    - Meetings must be capable of being held virtually, but each authority must decide whether their meetings will be held fully virtually, partially virtually (where some participants are in the same physical location, whilst others join the meeting virtually, also referred to as ‘hybrid meetings’) or as physical meetings (although authorities may **not** mandate physical attendance at meetings).
    - Meeting participants must be able to speak to and hear each other; and for meetings which are required to be broadcast (i.e.. full Council meetings), participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other.
    - These requirements took effect from May 2021, when the temporary provisions for remote attendance at meetings made under the Coronavirus Meeting Regulations 2020 ended.
  - c. Publish all meeting documents on the Council’s website, including notices, summonses, agendas, reports and background papers (with effect from May 2021).
    - A note of the meeting, including Members in attendance and decisions made, must be published within 7 working days of the meeting.

- Notice of meetings is no longer required to be posted at the Council's offices. However, copies of agendas and reports must be made available for the public if meetings are held physically.
  - The Council is also required to make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access electronic documents, for example, by providing access to computers, copies of documents, or making documents available for inspection.
4. When considering arrangements for remote attendance or 'multi-location meetings', authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: [Interim statutory guidance on multi-location meetings \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/interim-statutory-guidance-on-multi-location-meetings)
  5. Section 2 of the statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. This sets the framework within which authorities must consider options and decide the meeting arrangements which best suit the authority and the communities it serves.
  6. The guidance also confirms that the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.

#### Policy on Multi-Location Meetings

7. Alongside the legally mandated arrangements that authorities must make for multi-location meetings, the statutory guidance says that authorities should develop a wider policy setting out the detailed systems chosen by the authority for the operation of its multi-location meetings.
8. This policy is intended to clarify the arrangements of Multi-Locations meetings for:
  - Participants in meetings convened by the Council;
  - Officers providing support to formal meetings
  - Officers with adjacent responsibilities – for example, those responsible for drafting and clearing reports, attending meetings to present reports to members and officers with supervisory responsibilities on governance matters;
  - Anyone with an interest in the way in which the business of these authorities is conducted

#### Local Authority Meetings

9. Formal meetings of the Council or its committees are convened in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements for those meetings. These meetings are usually held to make formal decisions and are often held in public. Notice of these meetings is published in advance on the Council's website and includes information about the location, timing and business to be conducted. Previously these meetings would have been held with all participants being in physical attendance at a single venue.

## What are Multi-Location Meetings?

10. Multi-location meetings which may have been described previously as “remote” or “hybrid” meetings are meetings of the Council or its committees whose participants are not all in the same physical place. This may include:
  - all participants are in the same physical location except one individual who joins from another location, with a physical public gallery being provided;
  - a roughly equal number of members are present in a physical space with those joining through remote means;
  - all members are joining through remote means but nonetheless a physical public gallery has been made available in a Council venue
  - a meeting taking place wholly through remote means where no physical arrangements have been made.
11. Multi-location meetings offer this Council an opportunity to raise its profile in the community and to bring their work directly into people’s homes. Evidence from the remote meetings held during the pandemic shows that public access to multi-location meetings is likely to be significantly higher than the level of audiences of formal meetings when all meetings were held physically in a single location.

## Participation at a meeting

12. A “participant” of a multi-location meeting is defined in the statutory guidance as a person who takes an active part in that meeting. They might be an Elected Member, a person giving evidence to a committee as a witness, an appellant or claimant on a regulatory matter, someone presenting a petition, or taking part formally in another way.

## Observing a meeting

13. An “observer” of a multi-location meeting is defined in the statutory guidance as a member of an audience, or otherwise spectating, a multi-location meeting. They might be in the same room that a meeting is taking place or they might be observing by remote means.

## The benefits of multi-location meetings

14. Cardiff Council has been convening its meetings by remote means throughout much of 2020 and 2021. While meeting this way has proven to be initially challenging, it has also resulted in a number of benefits”
  - Enhancing and supporting local democracy by demonstrating this Council conducting its business;
  - Making it easier for the public to observe multi-location meetings.
  - Enabling external participants to actively engage at meetings to provide a greater range of views and to enhance decision making.
  - Making the Council more resilient and sustainable. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires relevant authorities to think about, and act on, long term needs in the way that policy is developed and made. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings (although

digital activity is not of course carbon-neutral). They can also help relevant authorities to reduce the risk of future unexpected events – such as extreme weather – which could in future present a challenge to in-person meetings.

- Reducing the need for travel. Significant time and cost savings for councillors, officers and other participants have arisen particularly for joint bodies.
- It is easier for participants to take part if they have professional and caring commitments.
- Better support for members from diverse backgrounds, by multi-location meetings making it easier for care providers, or disabled people, or people with other protected characteristics, to engage on an equal footing;
- Better behaviours. Although experiences have been mixed, on the whole meeting management and the behaviours of participants have both improved, with less heckling taking place at meetings.

### The challenges of multi-location meetings

15. There have been a number of significant challenges which need to be addressed to support multi-location meetings which include:
  - Suitable technology – before 2020, there was little or no technology other than basic video conferencing and webcasting. The rapid development of remote working technology during the coronavirus pandemic made basic remote meetings possible. The complexity of equipment and software necessary to deliver public multi-location meetings requires a significant further step-change in technology.
  - Reliance on the internet – Participants involved in remote meetings are reliant on having a suitable internet connection to join and maintain their presence in this type of meeting.
  - Cultural change – significant progress was made by the authority its Elected Members and public participants in adapting to remote meetings during the coronavirus pandemic. The development for multi-location meetings provides a significant cultural challenge from the existing processes for all those involved in the decision-making processes of the Council.
  - Accessibility and Security – the wide scale accessibility requirements of multi-location meetings facilities also needs to address the security of information and of meetings particularly when meetings can be recorded and broadcast.
  - Involvement and participation – The level of interest in local government decision-making is low and usually limited to those issues which have a specific personal impact. Whilst the pandemic provided an opportunity to increase the level of observers at meetings it is uncertain whether this will continue as the pandemic eases. Encouraging the public to become involved in the wider decision-making issues facing the Council will be an ongoing challenge.

## The Meeting Environment in Cardiff

### Physical Venues

16. Currently, the Council has a number of venues for its formal meetings with Committee Room 4 in County Hall having a limited multi-location meeting capability. The implementation of the Council's new conferencing system will address the



existing limitations in Committee Room 4 and provide three venues with the ability to fully support multi-location meetings:

- Council Chamber - City Hall
- Council Chamber - County Hall
- Committee Room 4 - County Hall

## The Technological Requirements

17. The delivery of multi-location meetings requires the provision of equipment and facilities to be able those involved to participate or observe meetings as identified below:

### Control Systems

18. Any multi-location meeting will be facilitated by Democratic Services Officers who will use the control systems to ensure that the full range of meeting facilities and functionality can be co-ordinated and integrated for all participants and observers to deliver effective meeting support. The control systems will provide and co-ordinate cameras, audio inputs and outputs, simultaneous translation, speaker queues, electronic voting, integration with the Council webcasting provider and to support participants and observers.

19. The following ICT equipment is required:

### Physical Participants and Observers

- Microphones to enable other participants and observers to hear the meeting proceedings, initiate a request to speak, support electronic voting and enable access to simultaneous translation facilities
- Appropriate cameras to show other participants and observers when the individual speaking
- Display screens to enable those physically participating/observing to see those attending remotely.
- Simultaneous translation equipment
- Audio enhancement and hard of hearing support.

### Remote Participants

- A suitable ICT device with camera and microphone facilities
- Suitable access to the internet.
- Relevant software provided by the Council to support remote attendance at meetings.

### Remote Observers

- A suitable ICT device with an audio output and ideally a visual display
- Internet access to view the Council's webcasting website. [Home - Cardiff Council Webcasting \(public-i.tv\)](#)

20. The rapidly evolution and improvement of technological development in software, equipment and the provision of appropriate security measures require regular review

to ensure the ease of provision and accessibility. This will need to be budgeted for as part of the cost of democracy.

## Determining the type of Meeting

21. The Welsh Government guidance identifies that the needs of local democracy, and the needs of the public in engaging with multi-location meetings, are a paramount consideration in deciding where and when meetings will be convened partially or wholly by remote means. The overriding intention of the Act is to help the public to be able to access and engage with local democratic systems. The convenience of participants and the efficient operation of relevant authorities themselves is important but the needs of the public will come first when these decisions are being made.
22. In addition to Council and Cabinet meetings the Council has 23 committees and sub-committees which support its statutory, regulatory and governance arrangements. There are also two joint committees which are formed by a number of other Local Authorities and which are administered by Cardiff Council.
23. Physical meetings should not be seen as representing the “gold standard” with multi-location meetings being second best. Physical meetings may be convenient and effective for those most familiar with and comfortable with how they work – but they may also be inaccessible and impractical to many.

## Predominantly Remote Meetings

24. The Glamorgan Archive and the Prosiect Gwyrdd Joint Committees have representatives from up to five other Local Authorities across South Wales. Given the challenges of travelling significant distances across the region and the need to ensure maximum participation, these meetings will primarily be held as fully remote meetings.
25. This does not preclude participants meeting physically either in a venue in their own local authority area, where the local authority has several representatives or at a mutually agreed location for a number of participants from differing local authorities where this is seen as beneficial for those participants or the decision-making process.

## Multi-location meetings

26. All meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings to ensure that participants, as defined above are able to attend remotely:

- Council
- Cabinet
- Constitution Committee
- Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee
- Democratic Services Committee
- Governance and Audit Committee
- Local Authority Governor Panel
- Pensions Committee
- Standards & Ethics Committee
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
- Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee
- Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

- Environmental Scrutiny Committee
- Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Planning Committee
- Public Protection Committee

27. Experience has identified that some meetings such as Public Protection Sub-Committee may be better suited to having a higher level of physical attendance. The following are considered to be those multi-location meetings where additional flexibility is needed due to the sensitive nature of these meetings and how they could potentially impact the livelihoods of those participants other than the Council representatives in attendance. However, this does not preclude some or all participants attending these meetings remotely if they wish or if there are overriding reasons for doing so. These include:

- Appointments Committees
- Council Appeals Committee
- Employment Conditions Committee
- Licensing Sub Committee
- Public Protection Sub Committee
- Standard and Ethics Sub Committee (Hearings Panel)

### Use of Cameras

28. Legislation requires participants of meetings that are broadcast to be able to “speak to and be heard by each other” and “to see and be seen by each other”. The ability to see and be seen predominantly applies when a participant is speaking, although for some meetings, participants attending remotely may also be required to ensure that their cameras remain on for the duration of the meeting, i.e. Planning Committee. For other meetings the Chair may use their discretion whether participants are to keep their cameras on when not speaking.
29. There are occasions when a remote participant may need to disable their camera to stabilise their connection to the meeting due to internet issues or because they have been temporarily interrupted by events at their location. If this occurs the participant should use the chat function to inform the meeting Chair and democratic services staff

### Health and Safety of Participants and Observers

30. Attendance at multi-location meetings may require participants and observers to use of display screen equipment or to be seated for extended periods of time. To negate any adverse impacts from attending multi-location meetings remotely participants will be requested to undertake a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment to ensure that the configuration of their equipment meets health and safety requirements.
31. It is recommended that a break away from the screen of 5-10 minutes after 1 hour of continuous display screen use or a longer break after 2 hours of continuous screen

use. The Chair should consider the need for appropriate breaks as part the agenda management arrangements of the meeting.

## Establishing the Calendar of Meetings

32. To provide clarity and transparency for participants and observers of council meetings a programme of meeting is developed annually which identifies when, where and how each of the Council's meetings will be held. This is subject to change during the year for operational reasons+.
33. The programme of meetings will avoid wherever possible scheduling meetings being held simultaneously. If this cannot be avoided the relevant Chairs will be consulted and one of the meetings will be undertaken as a fully remote meeting.

## The Survey of Meeting Timings

34. After each local election each committee or decision-making body has the opportunity to determine the most suitable day and time for their meetings to take place. This is also an opportunity for a committee to collectively agree the number of their meetings which are to be held predominantly physically or predominantly remotely during each municipal year. This may be based purely on a percentage of all scheduled meetings or reflect the view that physical attendance for particular topic i.e. Budget meetings which may benefit from a more fluid flow of debate. However, the Council may not mandate that any or all participants attend meetings physically. Meeting participants must be able to attend remotely if they wish to do so.
35. This determination will be reflected in the Council's programme of meetings and published on the Council's website. Where committee meetings are identified as primarily physical in the programme of meetings, this does not prevent committee members from attending meetings remotely.

## Attendance at Meetings

### Elected Member and Council Officer Participants

36. Invitations to meetings will be provided electronically using Microsoft Outlook or the relevant meeting software. The invitation will provide details of the meeting, its location and timings. It will also include links to enable the participants to join remotely should they wish to do so. On receipt of the invitation participants will be requested to indicate their intentions to attend the meeting physically or remotely to enable any necessary administrative and support arrangements to be put in place by Democratic Services.

### Remote Participants

37. Those participants considering attending the meeting remotely should also ensure that they have appropriate internet connectivity to join and maintain their attendance throughout the meeting. When joining remotely from a previously unused location participants are requested to inform Democratic Services and a test meeting will be established to confirm the level of connectivity in readiness for the formal meeting.

38. Detailed Guidance for Participants - Joining Remote Meetings is at **Appendix A**

#### Physical Attendance

39. All committee members are encouraged to physically attend at least one meeting every 6 months of each committee or decision-making body to which they are appointed during each municipal year where it is possible and practicable to do so.
40. On occasions due to physical space, technological issues or specific requirements such as the current need to socially distance in the pandemic, the number the number of physical attendees who may be present at each meeting may be limited. Where this is necessary the Chair of the meeting together with essential officer support for the Chair, multi-location meeting broadcasts and simultaneous translation are given priority for attendance. Consideration will also need to be given to external participants who may also need to attend the physical meeting in order to participate before any remaining spaces are allocated to the political groups in accordance with political balance. The political groups will give priority to any members who have difficulties joining a meeting remotely.

#### Attendance of other participants

41. Meetings are also attended by a range of participants other than committee members. These include invitees, witnesses, officers providing technical or other support, external experts and members of the public asking questions in accordance with the Council Procedure rules.
42. Once the need for additional participants including members of the public (where appropriate) is identified by service area or support officers, they will inform Democratic Services of the details and contact information of the participant. The external participants will be contacted by Democratic Services to confirm their attendance, explain how they can join the meeting either as a physical or remote participant and the meeting procedures. If the external participant is joining the meeting remotely an electronic meeting invitation similar to that of other participants will be sent. They will also be offered the opportunity of a test meeting to provide an element of confidence in the technology and the arrangements that are in place.
43. Detailed Guidance for Public Participants at Meetings is at **Appendix B** (to be developed).

#### Recording and broadcasting of meetings by observers

44. Members of the public are permitted to film or record Councillors and officers at any Council meetings that are open to the public and press, subject to compliance with the [Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules](#), Rule 4A which is summarised as followed:
- The recording or transmission must create no disturbance disruption or distraction to the good order and conduct of the meeting;
  - Any recording must be overt, not covert;
  - There is to be no recording or transmission of proceedings dealing with any exempt or confidential information;

- The Chair shall have discretion, subject to proper consideration of any relevant representations and legal advice, to prohibit a recording or exclude anyone reasonably considered to be in breach of these rules; and
- The person making the recording or transmission shall be solely responsible for complying with all applicable legal obligations arising from their actions

45. The Council also permits photography and social media reporting of all its public meetings.

### Record of Attendance

46. The attendance of each committee member and participant will be recorded by the Democratic Services Officer(s) supporting the committee. This will be achieved by recording their attendance on a sign in sheet at the physical meeting or using the attendance record from the remote meeting software to confirm attendance at the meeting. These records will be combined and added into the minutes of the meeting before being published on the Council's website.
47. Committee Members are to inform Democratic Services if they are unable to attend a meeting and their apologies will be recorded: at the meeting, in the minutes of the meeting and published on the Council's website.

### Observing Meetings

#### Webcast meetings

48. The main purpose of webcasting is to aid transparency, governance and accountability by giving members of the public, elected members, officers and other interested parties the opportunity to observe meetings without having to attend in person and for the Council to have an official audio and visual record of its decision-making process.
49. The following formal meetings of the Council will either be webcast by being streamed live or recorded for subsequent upload to the Council's webcasting website within 48 hours of the end of the meeting.
- Council
  - Cabinet
  - Planning Committee
  - Governance and Audit Committee
  - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
  - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee
  - Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee
  - Environmental Scrutiny Committee
  - Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee
  - Standards and Ethics Committee
50. Where resources allow, other meetings can be streamed live or recorded for subsequent upload to the Council webcasting webpages, if it is considered by the Chair that the meeting or items being considered at that meeting are of significant public interest.

51. Webcasting does not replace the formal record of the meeting and the decisions taken, which are published on the Council website in the form of minutes and retained in hard copy in accordance with the Council's retention policy.
52. The full [webcasting protocol is included in Part 5 Of the Council's Constitution to:](#)
  - Ensure compliance with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
  - To specify the notifications of webcasting in agenda packs, for public speakers and observers and at the start of each meeting being streamed or recorded
  - To ensure that appropriate signage is provided at physical meeting venues that recording is taking place.
  - Provide the Chair with the discretion to terminate or suspend the webcast in appropriate circumstances
  - Safeguard that no exempt or confidential agenda items will be webcast.
  - The availability of webcasts to be viewed on the Council's website and subsequently stored in accordance with the Council's records management procedures.
  - Allow the removal of webcasts or parts of webcasts by the Monitoring Officer.

#### Physical Attendance of Observers at Multi-location Meetings

53. Observers will also be able to attend the physical element of meetings from the public gallery in each of the primary locations.

#### Physical attendance of observers for Remote Meetings

54. To enable those observers who do not have access to the internet to view either fully remote or non-webcast meetings, they can request to attend a public viewing of that meeting. For viewing a fully remote meeting this will require them to request this facility 48 hours prior to the remote meeting to enable arrangements to be made in Committee Room 4 or another suitable location in County Hall for the viewing.

### Online Meeting Platforms

55. The Council will continue to use Microsoft Teams as its primary remote meeting platform. This platform should only be used by Elected Members from their Council provided devices to maintain the effective security of its meetings. Non-Council devices may be used with prior arrangement with Democratic Services, although the functionality available when using these "guest" devices may differ from that provided by the Council. Other participants are able to join meetings using links contained within the meeting invitation which is circulated to all participants.
56. Zoom will provide support for the simultaneous translation of Welsh at meetings.
57. The Council's conferencing system will include multi-location meeting software which will support simultaneous translation and provide additional meeting functionality.

### Publication of meeting information

#### Public information

58. The production and publication of the Programme of Meetings, public agenda, reports and minutes are facilitated by the Council's committee administration

software [Civica -Modern.gov](#). Meeting participants are sent an email which includes links to the electronic agenda pack three working days prior to a meeting.

59. The software enables the Council to publish public information to its English and Welsh webpages for the public to view. The public are also able to [subscribe to updates](#) on the [Councillors and Meetings](#) webpages and identify any specific meetings or topics which they have an interest in. Once registered, the Modern.gov system will automatically provide them with electronic updates when new information is published on the website.
60. Modern.gov is also available to download as an app from the [App store](#), [Google Play](#) and [Microsoft Store](#) which allows participants, observers and members of the public to view the Councils' meeting information. The Modern.gov app provides a paperless facility which enables participants to annotate their meeting document during their preparation for a meeting.
61. For those participants with an identified need or to provide ease of reading for more complex documents, hard copies can be provided with prior arrangement with Democratic Services.

### Non Public Information

62. Legislation requires that some information is not to be made publicly available and this is known as exempt or confidential information. When this type of information is considered at a formal meeting the documents are published on the Council's intranet and are only available to those entitled to view them. The publication of these documents is also supported by the Modern.gov app but participants will be required to register the device they intend to use for viewing these documents with Democratic Services. Successful registration of a device will provide access to the Councils "private" modern.gov network but will still limit the availability of the information to those entitled to view it.

### Consideration of exempt or confidential information at meetings.

63. When exempt or confidential information is to be considered at a formal meeting, wherever possible the agenda will schedule those items at the end of the meeting, so as to minimise any inconvenience to observers who will be required to leave the meeting at that point.
64. Agenda items which contain public information, and which are not fully exempt or confidential can be considered in a public environment. Should any participant wish to refer to the exempt or confidential information the Chair must be informed, and the meeting should exclude the press and public before continuing.
65. When an exempt or confidential item is planned to be considered the following options may be used to ensure that the information is not shared with others than those entitled to receive it:
  - a. an additional "private" remote meeting can be established by Democratic Services which will only include participants entitled to consider the exempt information. When the meeting moves into exempt session the entitled



participants will leave the public meeting and join the private meeting, leaving the remainder of the participants in the public remote meeting.

- b. request that those not entitled to consider the exempt information leave the public remote meeting or be moved to the “virtual” lobby whilst the exempt information is considered.

66. The meeting recording and webcast will be paused and a notification that the meeting is not currently open to the public will be displayed on the broadcast. In the physical part of the meeting any observers will be requested to leave the room whilst the exempt item is considered.
67. When consideration of the exempt information has been completed and there are further public items to be considered, all remote participants will be invited to re-join the public remote meeting and the recording and webcast will be resumed. The observers or participants attending the physical meeting will be invited to return into the meeting venue.

### Access and Participation at meetings

68. When elected or appointed to a committee or decision-making body, participants who are elected members will be able to use their Council issued ICT devices to receive meeting information and which will provide remote meeting software. Other committee members will be offered council ICT devices but will be able to use their own devices where appropriate.

### Training and induction

69. Committee Members will be provided with an appropriate induction to enable them to actively participate at meetings. The induction will include the use of the software for joining remote meetings, meetings procedures for joining and participating in physical and remote meetings, an understanding of the Code of Conduct and Council’s decision-making process and any committee specific procedures.
70. Training for some committee members is mandatory due to the requirements of the Council’s Constitution or the committee’s terms of reference.
71. A comprehensive guide to joining remotely in formal meetings is at **Appendix A** to this policy.

### Officer Support at meetings

72. Primary support for multi-location meeting will be provided by Democratic Services Officers. This will include the:
  - “Organiser” who will circulate the meeting appointment which will include a link to enable participants to join remotely. The organiser will also monitor the remote participants and assist them to join or re-join the remote meeting.
  - “Clerk” who will support the meeting, facilitate any voting and take the minutes
  - “Recording controller” will facilitate the live streaming of the meeting or the recording and subsequent upload of the meeting to the Council’s webcasting webpage.

- For larger or more technical meetings an additional Democratic Services Officer will support the other Democratic Services officers as necessary during the meeting.
- Technical support and advice may also be provided at the meeting by other specialist officers i.e. Legal, Planning, Scrutiny or Licensing Officers who can assist the Chair, participants and observers at meetings. The support for these meetings may be provided remotely or by physical attendance. Consultation between the relevant officers, their managers and the Chair will be necessary to ensure that appropriate service delivery and support requirements are met.

73. Additional support may be also provided by ICT Officers to ensure that the technology used during meetings operates effectively and that the meeting can be progressed as planned.

### Voting at Meetings

74. The voting arrangements will reflect the requirements in the Council's Constitution.

### Seeking Consensus

75. To negate the need for a formal vote, the Chair can seek a consensus from the meeting participants. The chair will state the recommendation and request that participants confirm if they have any objections to the recommendation(s) and if they do indicate any objection in the chat function in teams accordingly. The Chair will wait approximately 30 seconds to allow participants to indicate their objection and if none are received the recommendations are considered as being carried. If however, there are objections the Chair initiates a vote.

### Method of Voting

76. In a physical meeting voting will be carried out electronically and the names of those voting for, against or abstaining from voting will be recorded electronically.

### A Roll-Call vote

77. The roll call vote requires the Clerk to ask each participant individually if they are for or against the recommendation or if they wish to abstain from the vote. If a participant cannot be contacted to provide their vote, the clerk will continue with the roll-call vote and return to those participants who have not responded following once an attempt to contact all participants has been made. If the participant cannot be contacted after a second attempt to provide their vote and there is a quorum in attendance at the meeting the participant is considered as not in attendance.

78. Responses are recorded and when all of the participants in attendance have indicated their intentions, the Clerk will then collate the responses and inform the Chair of the outcome of the vote.

79. The Chair will announce the outcome of the vote to the meeting and a summary of the vote is pasted into the chat facility in teams to inform the meeting participants of the details of the vote.

## Chairing meetings

80. Chairing a multi-location meeting is very different to chairing a face-to-face meeting and the Chair will be supported to carry out their role as outlined in the Officer Support at meetings section above. The role of the Chair is particularly challenging at a physical meeting with some participants joining remotely. The “balance” between individuals in a room, and those joining by remote means, will have a significant effect on how business will be transacted.
81. Chairs have a particular responsibility to prepare for a multi-location meeting, in a more planned and directed way than might be necessary for a physical meeting. This may involve the Chair consulting with officers, committee members and participants in advance of a meeting.

## Chat Function use by Remote Participants

82. The chat function provides a simple method of enabling the chair to manage the meeting and to enable the remote participants to communicate with the chair. Remote participants should only use the Chat facility for the following occasions:
  - Speak – When the remote participant wishes to speak
  - Declaration – to advise the Chair that the remote participant wishes to make a declaration of interest other than at the Declarations of interest item on the agenda.
  - Point of Order – to notify the Chair that a remote participant has a Point of Order to make and the Chair should invite the participant to speak at the earliest opportunity.
  - Explanation - to notify the Chair that a remote participant has a Point of Personal Explanation to make and the Chair should invite the participant to speak at the earliest opportunity.
83. The “Chat” facility is only to be used for communicating with the Chair and is not to be used for offline discussions with other participants during the meeting.
84. Detailed Guidance for Chairs is at Appendix C

## Appendix A –Guidance For Participants - Joining Remote Meetings

### Preparing for a remote meeting

During a formal meeting participant will be expected to be able to fully interact from your remote location when the meeting starts. The following is a checklist to ensure that you are fully prepared:

#### Environment:

- ✓ Make sure that you set up your device in an area where you are unlikely to be disturbed. Remember that you should be the only person able to hear any confidential or exempt items being discussed.
- ✓ Ensure that your broadband connection is sufficient strong in that location to join and remain connected for the full duration of the meeting. If your broadband signal is weak you may wish to consider attending the physical meeting location. The legislation requires that you are able to be seen and heard.
- ✓ Ensure that your background is neutral and there is nothing that can be seen when you are on camera which may compromise your privacy or challenge your professionalism.
- ✓ Turn your microphone off, but be ready to activate it if you are called to speak. You should deactivate it when you have finished speaking to lessen background noise/interference for others.
- ✓ Have some water handy (off camera) to keep yourself hydrated throughout the duration of the meeting
- ✓ Turn off any noisy gadgets which may be distracting to yourself or other participants.

#### Equipment and software

- ✓ Ensure that your device is connected to the Council's Network between meetings to enable you to receive and manage the latest software and security updates.
- ✓ Check that Microsoft Teams is installed and you are able to connect to others.
- ✓ Check that your microphone is working and that the settings are correct. Too loud and there may be some feedback too quiet and you and the observers won't be able to hear you. Consider using headphones or earphones (with a microphone), similar to those you may use with your mobile telephone.
- ✓ Ensure that the camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of your face. This may require to consider the lighting in the room you're in (for example, sitting in front of a window may plunge your face into shadow). It may also involve putting your laptop on top of a couple of books so that you can look into the camera face on.

- ✓ Fully charge your equipment and ensure that you have easy access to charging facilities as remote meetings have a higher than normal power consumption.
- ✓ Ensure you know how to mute/unmute your microphone and to switch your camera on and off.
- ✓ Ensure you know how to use the "chat" facility as this may be used to show that you wish to speak. You should only use this facility for these purposes and not to conduct private conversations or a commentary as you might in private meetings.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the "emergency contact numbers" for the meeting which will provide you with technical support should you have any difficulties during the meeting.

#### General Meeting Preparation

- ✓ Determine how you can easily access the meeting agenda pack. Options may include the use of the latest version of the Modern.gov app on the same or different device, or by viewing reports from the Council's intranet.  
Note:  
If your camera is active during a meeting the "observers" may still be able to see you when you are using other applications on the same screen and you can't see them.
- ✓ When reading the reports consider whether you have any "Declarations of Interest" that you will need to be made at the meeting. Inform Democratic Services of any declarations that you need to make (as these will be read out at the start of a remote meeting) or contact the Monitoring/Legal officer well in advance of the meeting if you need their advice. Do not wait until just before a meeting as this will be problematic to provide you with the appropriate advice. Once you have received any advice please ensure you let Democratic Services know if you will be declaring an interest.

#### During a Meeting:

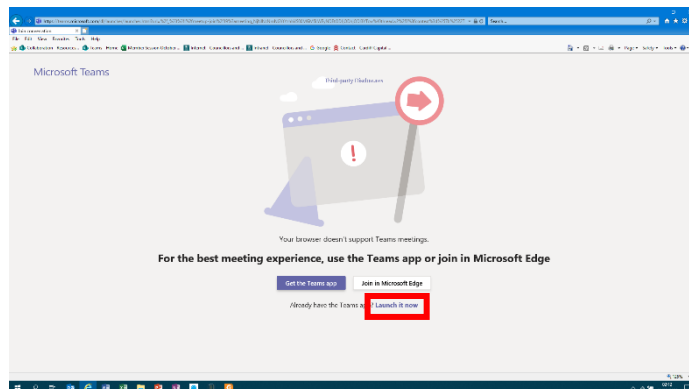
- ✓ Prepare thoroughly. The Chair and the public will assume that everyone has read any reports which are being considered and will be looking for observations and focussed debate.
- ✓ Do not use additional video conferencing software i.e. skype during the meeting as this will put you "on hold" for the main meeting.
- ✓ Remote meetings are likely to need to be shorter and more focused. Focus on the business at hand. Make sure that your contributions are necessary and do not repeat points already made.

#### **Note:**

It is recommended that all elected members attend a practice remote meeting to familiarise themselves with the remote meetings procedures and software. Please contact Democratic Services for more information.

## Joining a Formal Meeting using MS Teams

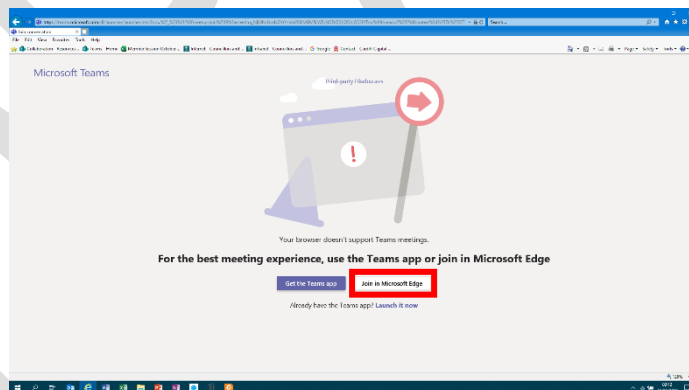
To join a "Teams Meeting" click on the "[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)" links in the Teams calendar appointment. When you click on the link, attendees using Council provided device should be provided direct access to the meeting. However if the following screen is displayed and you have a Council or other device with Microsoft Teams installed on it you should use the "Launch it now" link.



Depending on the configuration of your device you may be placed in a "virtual lobby" or waiting area before being authorised to join the meeting.

### Other participants

If you are not using a Council device you will need to click on the "[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)" links in your invitation or calendar appointment. This will direct you to a webpage and you will need to select either the "Join via the Web" or "Join in Microsoft Edge" options as shown below. When you have clicked on the relevant option and depending on the configuration of your device you may be placed in a "virtual lobby" or waiting area before being authorised to join the meeting.



### **IMPORTANT:**

Elected Members and other participants are requested not to action any prompt they may receive to grant meeting access to individuals in the "Virtual Lobby". Officers from Democratic Services will manage this functionality to ensure that only those entitled to join the meeting are permitted to do so.

Remote meetings will be open at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting as published on the agenda. This will provide an opportunity for all participants to join the

meeting and confirm that their equipment is working appropriately and for officers to provide any additional support that is needed.

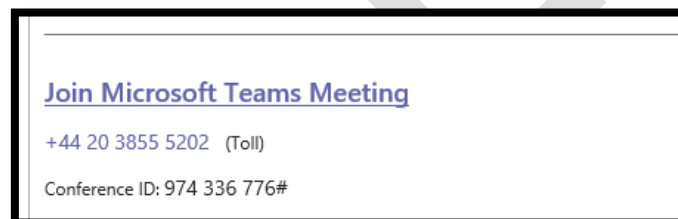
Officers will be monitoring the participants joining the meeting, identifying those who have sent their apologies and those who have yet to join the meeting.

The Chair will join the meeting 5 minutes the start of the meeting to provide any direction to the participants and instruct the Officers to start the recording or webcast of the meeting at the appropriate time.

If a participant is late joining the meeting, they are to send a chat message to advise the chair that they wish to speak. The Chair will invite them to speak. This will then enable them to be added to the record of attendance and provide any declarations of interest (as necessary)

### Joining a meeting by Telephone

In the event of technical issues preventing an attendee from being able to join a meeting using Microsoft Teams each meeting is allocated a conference call number and a Conference Identification number as shown below:



For the meeting shown above, the number to dial into the meeting is shown as +44 20 3855 5202. This requires anyone attempting to dial into the meeting from the UK to dial 020 3855 5205. An automated voice will request that you key in the Conference ID followed by a hashtag. Using your telephone keypad type in the conference ID number i.e. 974 336 776 # for the conference ID shown above.

You will be asked for your name and requested to wait in the virtual lobby. The meeting organiser from Democratic Services will be advised that you are waiting and provide you with access to the meeting.

Note: If you are intending to use the dial in facility for a meeting please inform Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.

# Appendix B - Guidance for Public Participants at Meetings

To be developed

DRAFT



## Appendix C - Guidance For Chairs

### Prior to the meeting the Chair should:

- confirm the purpose and anticipated outcomes for each item on the agenda.
- ensure that any information essential for consideration at the meeting, is made available to participants.
- identify where participants may wish to contribute in the meeting.
- ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to support effective participation.
- confirm that all participants (which may include external witnesses and members of the public or others) fully understand their role and how they can actively contribute to the meeting.
- ensure that they are aware of which participants are joining remotely.
- Any particular preparation that will need to be taken to If the Chair themselves is joining by remotely whilst other participants are present in a committee room.

### At the start of a meeting the Chair should:

- Consider the accessibility of the meeting to the public, ensuring that observers are welcomed and that the business of the meeting is explained in a way that is understandable, including the operation of the multilocation meeting itself.
- Provide a reminder of meeting arrangements and policies, particularly relating to conduct and behaviour, and any advice on voting arrangements.
- Introduce themselves, the committee, officers present and other participants to ensure that those watching or listening to a broadcast are aware who is in attendance at the meeting.
- Identify how a support officer or other member may bring their attention someone wishing to make a comment through remote means or in the committee room.
- Occasionally confirm throughout the meeting that no one has been 'lost' due to technical issues and provide support to councillors experiencing challenges although additional support may be needed from supporting officers.

### During the meeting the Chair should:

- Brief witnesses on expectations.
- Frame the meeting with reminders of the purpose of each agenda item, summarise decisions and actions for each item and again at the end of the meeting.
- Plan for the debate to be themed or otherwise structured rather than inviting comments generally, to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute.
- develop an understanding the motivations and objectives of individual participants on specific agendas items and a sense what they may want to say and ask.
- avoid people speaking over each other or long silences, ask each member in turn for their contribution to an item, based on an understanding of what members wish to contribute
- ensure that appropriate breaks are taken in accordance with [health and safety](#) requirements
- check that all members are content, that they have been able to contribute, and if necessary, provide a reminder of any voting arrangements.