

Multi-Location Meetings Policy



Cardiff Council 2022

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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.

Local Authority Meetings

3. In accordance with the 2021 Act this Multi-locations Meeting Policy will apply to all meetings of:
 - a. The Council
 - b. The Executive (Cabinet)
 - c. A joint committee of two or more local authorities
 - d. A committee or sub-committee of a. – c. above.
4. This policy does not cover:
 - a. meetings of other public bodies
 - b. public meetings or any other meeting bodies (including councils) of public meetings any or other meetings organised by the Council or another organisation.
 - c. Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) or community councils meetings, on which separate guidance is being prepared by Welsh Government.
5. 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 or recommendations 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.

Legal Requirements

6. 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, Cabinet, Committee and Joint Committee 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.
7. 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)
8. 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.
9. 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

10. 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.
11. This policy is intended to clarify the arrangements of Multi-Locations meetings for:
 - a. Participants in meetings convened by the Council;
 - b. Officers providing support to formal meetings
 - c. 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;
 - d. Anyone with an interest in the way in which the business of this authority is conducted
12. This policy will initially be reviewed after 12 months after implementation and subsequently on an “as required” basis.
13. In addition, separate detailed guidance is provided as follows:
 - a. Guidance for Council Participants and Observers
 - b. Guidance for Public Participants and Observers
 - c. Guidance for Chairs

What are Multi-Location Meetings?

14. 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 one physical space compared 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 meeting arrangements have been made.
15. Multi-location meetings offer this Council an opportunity to raise its profile in the community and to bring its 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

16. 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

17. 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

18. 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:
 - a. Enhancing and supporting local democracy by demonstrating this Council conducting its business.
 - b. Making it easier for the public to observe multi-location meetings.
 - c. Enabling external participants to actively engage in meetings to provide a greater range of views and to enhance decision making.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Reducing the need for travel. Significant time and cost savings for councillors, officers and other participants have arisen, particularly for joint bodies.
 - f. It is easier for participants to take part if they have professional and caring commitments.
 - g. 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.
 - h. 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

19. There have been a number of significant challenges which need to be addressed to support multi-location meetings, which include:
 - a. 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.

- b. 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.
- c. Fully remote meetings are not accessible to those individuals and communities who are considered as digitally excluded. The provision of multi-location meetings offers an opportunity of equality of access to all.
- d. 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 of multi-location meetings provides a significant cultural challenge from the existing processes for all those involved in the decision-making processes of the Council.
- e. 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.
- f. 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

20. 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:
- a. Council Chamber - City Hall
 - b. Council Chamber - County Hall
 - c. Committee Room 4 - County Hall

The Technological Requirements

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

Control Systems

22. Any multi-location meeting will be facilitated by Democratic Services or Cabinet Office 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.

23. 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 without compromising the audio quality of the remote attendees.

Remote Participants

- A suitable ICT device with camera and microphone facilities
- Suitable access to the internet.
- Relevant software which is publicly available 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 \(public-i.tv\)](#)

24. 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

25. 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 and a balance has to be achieved with the physical and remote element of meetings when decisions are being made.
26. In addition to Council and Cabinet meetings the Council has in the region of 23 committees and sub-committees which support its statutory, regulatory and governance arrangements. There are also two joint committees which involve by a number of other Local Authorities and which are administered by Cardiff Council.

27. 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 who are digitally excluded or most familiar with and comfortable with how they work – but they may also be inaccessible and impractical to many.

Predominantly Remote Meetings

28. 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 and other Joint Committees supported by the authority will primarily be held as fully remote meetings.
29. With appropriate facilities in other local authority venues, multi-location meetings may enable some participants to attend physically in venues in or near their own area whilst the remaining participants attend remotely. This does not preclude a number of participants from differing local authorities meeting remotely at a mutually agreed location where this is seen as beneficial for those participants or the decision-making process.
30. This type of arrangement may also be suitable for those meetings which require participants to travel across the city at peak periods to attend meetings outside of normal working hours such as the Local Authority Governor Panel.

Multi-location meetings

31. All meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings to ensure that participants, as defined above are able to attend remotely. This includes meetings of the following:
- Council
 - Cabinet
 - Constitution Committee
 - Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee
 - Democratic Services Committee
 - Employment Conditions Committee
 - Governance and Audit Committee
 - 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
32. Experience has identified that some meetings 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
- Licensing Sub Committee
- Public Protection Sub Committee
- Standard and Ethics Sub Committee (Hearings Panel)

Use of Cameras

33. The Law 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, for example, quasi-judicial meetings such as Planning Committee. For other meetings the Chair may use their discretion whether participants are to keep their cameras on when not speaking.
34. 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

35. 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 particularly where they are expected to be in attendance at meetings for over 2 hours, to ensure that the configuration of their equipment meets health and safety requirements.
36. It is recommended that a break away from the screen of 5-10 minutes should be taken 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

37. 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+.
38. The programme of meetings will avoid wherever possible scheduling meetings to be held simultaneously or immediately following another meeting. 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

39. 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 each committee to collectively agree the number of their meetings which are to be held predominantly physically or predominantly remotely or multi-location, with provision for physical attendance 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.
40. 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

41. 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 and the Cabinet Office.

Remote Participants

42. 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.

Physical Attendance

43. All committee members are encouraged to physically attend at least one meeting of each committee or decision-making body to which they are appointed during each municipal year.
44. Although physical attendance of participants cannot be mandated, there is no restriction for participants on their own volition, determining to physically attend any or all meetings.

45. The technological requirements for physical meetings will limit the available meeting venues to the City Hall Council Chamber, the County Hall Council Chamber and County Hall Committee Room 4. Following successful implementation of the Council's new conferencing system a further procurement may be undertaken to enable other venues to be utilised with a fully portable camera and display systems which can be used in tandem with the existing conferencing facilities.
46. On occasions due to physical space, technological issues or specific requirements such as socially distancing rules, 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 staff are given priority for attendance. Priority consideration will also need to be given to external participants at non-executive meetings, 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 are expected to give priority to any members who have difficulties joining a meeting remotely.
47. Member Development and other informal opportunities to facilitate physical meetings of committee members may be used to promote good practice, develop working relationships and to mitigate any adverse impact of remote attendance at formal meetings.

Attendance of other participants

48. Meetings are also attended by a range of participants other than committee members. These include invitees, witnesses, officers providing technical or other support for example, Principal Scrutiny Officers, external experts and members of the public asking questions in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.
49. 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 familiarise themselves with the technology and the arrangements that are in place.

Recording and broadcasting of meetings by observers

50. Members of the public are permitted to photograph, film or record Councillors and officers and use social media at any Council meetings that are open to the public and press, as long as:
 - Notice has been given (on the meeting agenda and signage outside the meeting) so that everyone attending the meeting is made aware that they may be recorded and that by attending the meeting they are deemed to consent to this;

- 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

[\[Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, Rule 4A\]](#)

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

Record of Attendance

52. The attendance of each committee member and participant will be recorded by the Democratic Services or Cabinet Officer(s) supporting the committee. This will be achieved by recording attendance on a sign in sheet 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.
53. Committee Members are to inform the relevant Democratic Services or Cabinet Support Officers 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

54. 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.
55. 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
 - All Scrutiny Committee meetings
 - Standards and Ethics Committee

56. A total of 200 hours is available annually for webcasting meetings and the total usage will be monitored by Democratic Services Officers. 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.
57. 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 or decision records and retained in hard copy in accordance with the Council's retention policy.
58. A [webcasting protocol is included in Part 5 Of the Council's Constitution](#) which serves to:
- Ensure compliance with the Council's obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
 - Specify the notifications to be given about webcasting in agenda packs, for public speakers and observers and at the start of each meeting being streamed or recorded
 - Ensure that appropriate signage is provided at physical meeting venues to make clear 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.
 - Confirm the availability of webcasts to be viewed on the Council's website and subsequently stored in accordance with the Council's records management procedures.
 - Provide for the removal of webcasts or parts of webcasts by the Monitoring Office, if necessary.

Physical Attendance of Observers at Multi-location Meetings

59. 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

60. To enable those observers who do not have access to the internet to view either fully remote or non-webcast meetings, they may request to attend a public viewing of that meeting. For viewing a fully remote meeting this will require a request to be submitted 2 clear working days 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

61. The Council will continue to use Microsoft Teams as its primary remote meeting platform until the implementation of the Council's new conferencing system. 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 by prior arrangement with Democratic Services and Cabinet Officers, although the functionality available when using these "guest" devices may differ from that provided by the Council's devices.

62. Council participants using other devices rather than their Council provided devices presents security concerns, because: this does not allow them to be identified as an official attendee; they will be required to use the lobby when they join a meeting; it creates uncertainty for officers when admitting unknown or unfamiliar participants to the meeting from the lobby, as other devices do not have access to the Council's network security infrastructure.
63. Other participants are able to join meetings using links contained within the meeting invitation which is circulated to all participants.
64. For facilitating dual language meetings Zoom can be used instead of Teams for our formal meetings when a request to speak Welsh is made in advance of a meeting.
65. The Council's conferencing system will include multi-location meeting software which will support simultaneous translation and provide additional meeting functionality. Further detailed guidance is available for Council and Public Participants.

Publication of meeting information

Public information

66. The production and publication of the Programme of Meetings, public agenda, reports, decision records and minutes are facilitated by the Council's committee administration software [Civica-Modern.gov](https://www.civica-modern.gov). Meeting participants are sent an email which includes links to the electronic agenda pack at least three clear working days prior to a meeting.
67. 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 electronic updates when new information is published on the website.
68. 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.
69. 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 either Democratic Services or Cabinet Support Officers as necessary.

Non Public Information

70. The law provides that some information may not 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.

71. 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.
72. 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.
73. 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 anyone other 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.
74. 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.
75. When consideration of the exempt information has been completed, if 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

76. 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 have remote meeting software installed. Other committee members will be offered Council ICT devices but may be able to use their own devices where appropriate.

Training and induction

77. 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 requirements and the Council's decision-making process and any committee specific procedures.
78. Training for certain committee members is mandatory due to the requirements of the role, as confirmed in the Council's Constitution or the committee's terms of reference.

Officer Support at meetings

79. Primary support for multi-location meeting will be provided by Democratic Services and the Cabinet Office. 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 or Cabinet officers as necessary during the meeting.
 - Technical support and advice may also be provided at the meeting by other specialist officers, for example, Legal, Planning, Scrutiny or Licensing Officers who can assist the Chair, participants and observers at meetings. The officer support for meetings should follow the arrangements for other participants and 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.
80. 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

81. The voting rule are set out in the relevant procedure rules in the Council's Constitution.

Seeking Consensus

82. To negate the need for a formal vote, the Chair may 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 that they indicate any objection either verbally or by using 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 may be considered as carried. If however, there are objections the Chair shall initiate a vote.

Method of Voting

83. 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

84. 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 after 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 shall be recorded as not in attendance.
85. Responses are recorded and when all of the participants in attendance have indicated their vote, the Clerk will then collate the responses and inform the Chair of the outcome of the vote.
86. The Chair will announce the outcome of the vote to the meeting and a summary of the vote shall be pasted into the chat facility in Teams to inform the meeting participants of the details of the vote.

Chairing meetings

87. 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.
88. 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.
89. Separate guidance will be provided for Committee Chairs which will be made available on the Council's intranet.

Chat Function use by Remote Participants

90. 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 to indicate the following:
 - 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 under 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. 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. The Chair should invite the participant to speak at the earliest opportunity.

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.

Associated Documents:

- Guidelines for Public Participants and Observers of Multi-location Meetings
- Guidelines for Council Participants and Observers at Multi-location Meetings
- Guidelines for Chairing Multi-location Meetings