



Report to: Audit & Governance Committee Meeting -
11 December 2024

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Government Consultation - Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings
Purpose of Report	To consider a formal Council response to the government consultation on remote attendance at meetings and proxy voting
Recommendations	That the Audit & Governance Committee considers the draft response to the Government consultation, as set out in the Appendix A to the report
Reason for Recommendation	To submit a formal Council response to the Government consultation given its potential impact on governance arrangements

1.0 Background Information

- 1.1 The Government is consulting on introducing powers for local authority members to apply to the relevant authority for a dispensation to attend formal council meetings remotely and vote by proxy in certain circumstances.
- 1.2 The consultation stems from a recognition that there are circumstances in which it may not always be possible for members to attend council meetings in person. It is with this in mind that the government intends to amend the law to introduce provisions for remote attendance at local authority meetings.
- 1.3 The government hopes that such flexibility will strike the right balance between in-person and remote attendance. It is also hoped that such provisions would encourage a wider diversity of people willing and able to stand and actively participate in local democracy by creating improved conditions where meetings are accessible and inclusive.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

- 2.1 The online consultation [Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings - GOV.UK](#) was sent to all Members inviting them to respond individually, but it is considered that the Council should also submit a formal response.
- 2.2 A draft proposed response to the consultation is attached as Appendix A to the report. Audit & Governance Committee are invited to consider this draft proposed response, with the agreed response being submitted prior to the consultation deadline of 19 December 2024.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

3.1 ICT & Digital Services

If legislation enabled Members to join meetings in a remote manner this would need to be facilitated through Teams which will introduce a further possible point of failure when blending with the live stream of meetings. This may also bring about further resource implications going forward. Given security protocols Members would not be able to join any meeting remotely from outside the UK.

3.2 Legal Services / Equalities Issues

If the law is changed and the Council decides to adopt revised arrangements, the Council's meeting procedure rules will need to be updated, and a remote meeting protocol may need to be adopted. While remote meetings may have advantages from an equalities perspective in enabling remote access, consideration would need to be given to those who do not use ICT, for example alternative remote access such as dial-in.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.