



**COUNCIL: 11 December 2024**

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**Report of: Chief Legal & Democratic Services Officer (Monitoring Officer)**

**Relevant Lead Member: Councillor Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Legal & Democratic**

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**SUBJECT: CONSULTATION RESPONSE: ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS**

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Wards affected: (All Wards);

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To consider the response to the Government's consultation 'Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings'.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the response to the consultation document, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

## **3.0 THE CONSULTATION**

3.1 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. This consultation closes on 19 December 2024. All Members have been notified of the consultation and are encouraged to reply individually.

## **4.0 THE PROPOSAL FOR REMOTE ATTENDANCE**

4.1 The government intends to legislate to give local authorities the flexibility to allow elected members to attend formal council meetings remotely. The government believe that this modernising measure of providing broad flexibility to enable remote attendance, will have the dual positive impacts of diversifying the representation of those willing and able to stand for elected office and enhance the resilience of local authorities in the face of local or national emergencies.

4.2 The intent is that this legislative change would give local authorities the flexibility to allow members to attend remotely.

## **5.0 THE PROPOSAL FOR PROXY VOTING**

5.1 Proxy voting is a form of voting whereby a member of a decision-making body may delegate their voting power to another representative to enable a vote in their absence.

5.2 It is possible some members may find that, due to their personal circumstances, they are temporarily unable to participate in meetings even if remote attendance provisions are in place. Provisions for proxy voting could provide additional flexibility to those who really need it on a time-limited basis, allowing affected members to indirectly exercise their democratic duty, participate in their local authority's governance, and ensure that their views are taken into consideration. The representative would have to be another elected member of the local authority.

## **6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers.

## **9.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

### **Appendices**

1. Government consultation document 'Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings'
2. Response to the Consultation document.