Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Hysbysiad o Gyfarfod

Fe'ch gwahoddir i gyfarfod

Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Lleoliad: **O bell drwy Microsoft Teams**

Dyddiad: **Dydd Llun, 27 Medi 2021**

Amser: **2.00 pm**

Cadeirydd: **Y Cynghorydd Lynda James**

Aelodaeth:
Cynghorwyr: J E Burtonshaw, N J Davies, M Durke, J A Hale, M Jones, S M Jones,
E T Kirchner, W G Lewis, B J Rowlands, G J Tanner, L J Tyler-Lloyd a/ac L V Walton

Gwylio ar-lein: https://bit.ly/3kkPRON

Agenda

Cyfarfod nesaf: Dydd Llun, 8 Tachwedd 2021 ar 4.00 pm

Huw Evans, Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd
Dydd Mawrth, 21 Medi 2021

Cyswllt: Gwasanaethau Democrataidd - (01792) 636923

City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 19 July 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L James (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	**Councillor(s)**	**Councillor(s)**
J E Burtonshaw	N J Davies	M Durke
M Jones	S M Jones	W G Lewis
G J Tanner	L V Walton	L J Tyler-Lloyd

Officer(s)
Allison Lowe   Democratic Services Officer
Tracey Meredith   Chief Legal Officer / Monitoring Officer

Apologies for Absence
Councillor(s): E T Kirchner

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6   Election of Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2021-2022.

Resolved that Councillor Wendy Lewis be elected Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2021-2022.

7   Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

8   Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Special Democratic Services Committee held on 14 October 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

9   Member Induction Programme 2022.

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to seek input from the Democratic Services Committee as to the Induction Training requirements for councillors following the 2022 local government elections.

She referred to the accompanying documents outlined as follows:
Appendix 1 – Councillor Induction & Training Programme for 2017-2018;
Appendix 2 - WLGA "A Development Framework for Councillors in Wales 2021;
Appendix 3 WLGA Induction Curriculum in Wales for the Local Government

Elections 2022 (Draft).

Comments from the Committee included:

- Excellent starting point that could be built on;
- Social media and IT, including rules and etiquette more important than ever, particularly if continuing with on-line meetings;
- Work around potential candidates in underrepresented groups required as outlined in Diversity in Democracy (report to Council on 29 July);
- Information for candidates should be published on our website to include the induction training schedule so that candidates were aware of this requirement;
- Councillors would have different strengths and weaknesses eg Budget / financial knowledge would vary;
- Limit the initial amount of training provided when Councillors were first elected as it could be overwhelming;
- An officers contact factsheet would be helpful;
- Councillor or officer mentor scheme was very useful;
- Suggest weaving awareness of the democratic process in our new schools curriculum;
- Information on new socio-economic duty;
- Members Lounge – provided social interaction with other newly elected and returning councillors.

Resolved that:

1) The report be noted;
2) A Working Group be set up to consider any additional requirements for the 2022 Local Government Election Induction Programme;
3) Appendix C, referred to in Appendix 1 be circulated by email to the Democratic Services Committee.

10   Councillor Questionnaire.

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to consider a councillor questionnaire to be sent to all councillors seeking feedback on remote attendance at committee meetings during the pandemic.

Once finalised, the questionnaire would be circulated by the Consultation Co-ordinator, who would collate the responses in order that a further report be presented to the Democratic Services Committee in order to develop a Hybrid meeting policy.

Resolved that:

1) Comments or amendments be emailed to the Monitoring Officer by Monday, 26 July 2021;
2) A further report outlining the results of the questionnaire be presented to the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee in order to develop a Hybrid meeting policy.

11   Workplan 2021-2022.

The Chair outlined the Work Plan for 2021-2022 and suggested that due to the volume of work contained in the Work Plan, that the Democratic Services Committee schedule additional meetings from now until the Local Government Elections in May 2022.

She suggested either shorter monthly meetings or longer bi-monthly meetings.

Resolved that:

1)   The Work Plan for 2021-2022 be noted with the addition of the following items:
    • Results of Councillor Questionnaire;
    • "Hybrid Meeting Policy";
2)   Additional meetings be scheduled from September 2021 – May 2022.

The meeting ended at 4.54 pm

Chair

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Special Democratic Services Committee – 27 September 2021

Results of Members Questionnaire on Remote Attendance

Purpose:	To feedback to the Committee following the circulation of a questionnaire to members and officers on remote attendance.
Policy Framework:	Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that the Committee:
1)	Note the response of councillors and officers to the Questionnaire attached at appendix A.
Report Author:	Tracey Meredith
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

1.1 At their meeting of the 19 July 2021 the Committee approved a revised Questionnaire to be circulated to members and officers around their experience of remote attendance at meetings and what could be learned from their experience and changed or improved on.

1.2 The Questionnaire was circulated on 9 August and the responses can be found at Appendix 1. In total 42 persons responded with 32 councillors responding and 10 officers.

2. Questionnaire results

2.1 Although disappointing that only 32 councillors responded there were some consistent results.

2.2   92.9% of those responding thought the current remote meetings worked well with 42.9% of the view that they worked very well.

2.3   The benefits of remote meetings were overwhelmingly because it saved time, saved travelling time and was good for the environment. The disadvantages of remote meetings, perhaps not surprisingly, focused on IT issues and the need for 2 devices but there was also reference to missing the social interaction of committee meetings.

2.4   In terms of Question 5 and what meetings did councillors/officers consider should by hybrid/face to face/remote only, the response was overwhelmingly in favour of supporting the hybrid option for all meetings save ceremonial council where 55.8% favoured a face to face ceremonial council. There was very little enthusiasm for remote only meetings going forward.

2.5   In terms of additional support there is mention of hard copy papers, written reports for PDC's and additional training.

2.6   As the work on the Council Chamber and Gloucester Room progresses further work will continue on developing a hybrid/multi location policy for councillors and officers.

3.   Integrated Assessment Implications

3.1   The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.2   The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

3.3   Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

3.4   An IIA Screening Form has been completed and no adverse implications have been noted. The Committee is receiving a report on councillor feedback to a questionnaire on remote attendance.

4.   Financial Implications

4.1   There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5.   Legal Implications

5.1   There are no legal implications associated with this report. The legislation to continue remote attendance is contained within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:
Appendix 1 - Questionnaire on remote attendance at committee meetings responses.

If you would like this survey in an alternative format e.g. Large Print please contact consultation@swansea.gov.uk, 01792 636732

Consultation for Councillors: Remote Meetings

Work is being undertaken by Welsh Government on multi location meetings Guidance and the Authority is working on a hybrid policy for future multi location (remote) meetings. We would welcome your views on this to gather information on what we can do to support you as councillors to enable your continued remote access to meetings.

Q1   **Are you a...**
32 (76.2%) Councillor
10 (23.8%) Member of staff

Q2   **How do you feel the current remote meeting arrangements work?**
18 (42.9%) **Very well**   21 (50.0%) **Well**   2 (4.8%) **Neither well or poorly**   1 (2.4%) **Poorly**   0 (0.0%) **Very poorly**

Q3   **What have been the benefits of remote meeting attendance?   E.g. saves time**
43 (100.0%)

1) saves time 2) less driving so less air pollution 3) can see everyone so helps me to hear what they are saying
Able to attend more meetings, saves time and travel costs, easier to join for part of a meeting. Can easily control who joins and can break out into virtual rooms without the need of physical rooms.
Cuts down travelling time, meetings tend to be shorter and well run focusing on the right issues, on the whole attendance is better.
Ease of attendance, covid safer, society and home life has been disrupted and remote working has helped me keep working at all at times, saves travel time, can fit more meetings in a day, wider public opportunity to participate
Easier to attend back to back meetings, cuts down on time spent travel.
I think more councillors have more time to attend and saves time and trying to park at the guildhall
It fits in with my responsibilities at home. My concentration seems to be on a higher level. Time is definitely saved, this means I can see more of my family.
Less time consuming; less time away from family.

More flexibility in terms of time, more ability to attend meetings during working hours, less car use so more environmentally friendly
More flexible
More productive, convenient, cuts down on travel time, enables meetings with people from across Wales and the UK without lengthy travel
Much easier to join meetings around other commitments as can join within minutes of being at other work duties. Saves time, travel etc.
Not having to travel to meetings.
Not rushing to get from work to a meeting in Swansea
Only benefit it saves travel time
Reduction in travel/parking = less stress/rushing, increased productivity ie no disturbances/noise, able to support local economy
Saves time
Saves time and fuel usage.
Saves time and reduces carbon footprint.
Saves time and travel
Saves time and travel; also i can log in from work and only have to be absent for the duration of the meeting.
Saves time between meetings
Saves time particularly travel time, reduced fuel consumption which helps the environment
Saves time travelling
Saves time travelling between venues. Format has worked well. Be good to enhance video conference facilities to give even better functionality
Saves time, easy to work around family commitments/other work commitments
Saves time, saves paper, saves driving to Swansea & back
saves time, saves travelling
Saves time, so you can get more work done. You can also set up meetings more quickly, so it helps with the workload - I have seven meetings set up for next Monday - if they were not remote, it would not be possible.
saves time, travel, less chatting
Saves time.   Allows for other work if running over agenda etc.
Saves Time; convenient
Saves time; good for the environment (less traffic on the road/use of public transport)
Saves travel
Saves travel.
Sometimes it allows me to attend whilst away from home and the work place which I find very useful
Sometimes it allows me to attend whilst away from home and the work place which I find very useful

Supported continued pro-active working during Covid. Reduced travel time.   Achieved proven benefits of flexible and agile working for employees.
The main benefit for me has been travelling time, parking issues and time saving
Time and travel savings and associated environmental benefits. Some meetings tend to be more focused when remote
time saved
Time saving, helps with child care responsibilities, 'greener'
Time, travelling, parking

Q4   **What have been the disadvantages of remote meeting attendance?   E.g. additional IT training in MS Teams**
40 (100.0%)

1) connection issues 2) real contact & personal interaction
Accessing agenda
Conversations, other work getting covered pre / post meeting.
Don't get to see colleagues for networking
Engagement is perhaps less in remote meetings, people more inclined NOT to input online
Even though I agree to remote meetings I think we should get back to some sort of normal it would encourage staff and the public we gave faith in getting back to normal
Frustrating when the technology doesn't work,   particularly when not able to access Teams meeting
Getting use to the system in the beginning.
Having to use two appliances so that I can look at reports, I would like a refresher on how to get reports up when on one appliance only
Having to use two appliances so that I can look at reports, I would like a refresher on how to get reports up when on one appliance only
I do need training as my IT skills are not good. I have missed that although I have had help from IT Officer's during the pandemic.
I haven't found any disadvantages
it is often difficult to work on agendas which are on screen. Also there are some IT issues that are encountered. Electronic voting works well in Cabinet
Lack of personal contact with people
Lack the dynamic of actual people in the room
Loss of connection; not being able to see everyone in the room; missing people who have their hand up to make a comment
Loss of informal discussion during meetings; no role for body language.
Miss those 'before and after' informal chats and exchange of info, occasional IT issues

No ability to network before and after meetings, lack of informal team communication and support, no corridor water cooler conversations
No personal contact, I miss to social interaction with fellow Councillors/Officers.
No personal contact, no response which members can see when asking questions.
None
None
None
None
None for me
Not able to meet officers face to face to resolve problems, not having access to physical resources like computers and stationery
Not meeting other councillors
Nothing for me except not mixing in person
Poor connectivity, freezing screen, over large agendas.
poor internet connections
Problems with the Internet being inconsistent
Reduced spontaneous conversations and difficult when technology doesn't work properly, or when some are in a large room and the mic's don't work appropriately.
Remote voting took a while to be introduced.
Some occasional broadband stutters, some audio feedback issues to do with physical council rooms used, back to back meets can be utterly relentless
tech sometimes erratic
The requirement to use 2 electronic devices. One to join meeting and the other for displaying lengthy documents.
Too easy to put an additional meeting in and you lose the benefit of discussion
unable to speak face to face, loss of use of paper copies, difficulty in referencing information
We have learnt as we moved on. They are now second nature.

Q5 **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 allows for continued remote attendance at meetings and for councils to adopt a hybrid policy where members could choose to attend a meeting in person or attend remotely on a permanent basis. Which meetings do you think should be: Face to Face, Remote only or Hybrid?   (Please tick)**

	Face to Face Only	Remote Only	Hybrid	Don't Know
Full Council	15 (34.9%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (60.5%)	2 (4.7%)
Ceremonial Council	24 (55.8%)	1 (2.3%)	15 (34.9%)	3 (7.0%)
Cabinet (Cabinet members only)	3 (9.7%)	1 (3.2%)	22 (71.0%)	5 (16.1%)
Scrutiny Committee	3 (7.5%)	4 (10.0%)	31 (77.5%)	2 (5.0%)
Regulatory Committees i.e. Licensing and Planning	6 (14.6%)	3 (7.3%)	30 (73.2%)	2 (4.9%)
Other Committees i.e. Standards Committee, Pension Fund Committee and Democratic Services Committee	4 (9.3%)	4 (9.3%)	32 (74.4%)	3 (7.0%)
Governance and Audit Committee	3 (7.1%)	5 (11.9%)	33 (78.6%)	1 (2.4%)
PDC	4 (9.3%)	6 (14.0%)	31 (72.1%)	2 (4.7%)

Q6 **Do you think a hybrid policy should contain a minimum number of members having to be physically present in the Council Offices?**

9 (21.4%) Yes
19 (45.2%) No
14 (33.3%) Don't mind

Q7   **If answer is yes, what would you suggest is the minimum number of officers that should be present?**
9 (100.0%)

1 - the lawyer
20%
50%
3
3 - Monitoring Officer, Sec.151 Officer where finance is involved and Head of Dem. Services.
Depends on the meeting
One third.
The amount of officers who have to speak at the meetings.
Two.

Q8   **Do you think a hybrid policy should provide that officers should always be present in the Council Offices in person for meetings?**
5 (11.6%) Yes
22 (51.2%) No
16 (37.2%) Don't mind

Q9   **If you are a Chair or Vice Chair of a Committee, would you wish to be present in the Council Offices in person for meetings?**
9 (28.1%) Yes
8 (25.0%) No
15 (46.9%) Don't mind

Q10   **If yes to Q7 would you wish to have Officer support in person to help facilitate the meeting?**
5 (100.0%)   Yes
0 (0.0%) No
0 (0.0%) Don't mind

Q11 **What additional support do you feel you might require to enable full participation in the meeting as a committee member?**
29 (100.0%)

Access to agenda possibly on shared screen or second digital equipment
All papers to be made available as hard copies if a councillor prefers this; personally I spend a lot of time on my PC anyway and much prefer reading from a hard copy both to get away from the screen but also as I find it easier to add notes
Better kit in the offices to allow hybrid working, loads of echo or feedback if people are joining from laptops in one room, rather than using shared screen.
bigger screen at home or 2 screens would be best
Don't know the answer when we have Internet connection issues at home
Ensuring those online can still hear those present in person and vice versa.
further education
I am very happy with the the Democratic Services, as the meeting agenda's are always sent out on time in readiness for meetings.
I feel that written reports should be given and not verbal reports as in some PDCs. I feel that verbal reports don't give enough time for to think of questions to be asked
I feel that written reports should be given and not verbal reports as in some PDCs. I feel that verbal reports don't give enough time for to think of questions to be asked
I have enjoyed Cannot think remote team meetings. I believe we have all the information we need from Officers. Cannot think of any additional help.
I think that the issuing of laptops with a separate monitor would help members see agendas and stay on teams
N/A
Nil
Nine
None
None
None
None
None.
Nothing I can think of at the moment
officer participation for advice
Ongoing training on a needs basis.
Possibly additional IT training
Possibly some more training on any new video conference facilities
The support has been given throughout this process

Training
We have been doing it for over a year. I am guessing hybrid meetings might be a little different.   I'd be OK but training & support would be required for the future
Zoom training/IT training

Q12   Anything else you would like to add
21 (100.0%)

Hybrid meetings afford maximum flexibility to time-pressed Councillors.
hybrid meetings should not replace travel expenses/ reimbursement care costs for cllrs who need it
I can appreciate that online meetings will be part of going forward but it's imperative that even if we go for the hybrid route all technical issues that we have control over must be addressed.   I also think companies like MS for Team need to do far more work on making Captions fit for purpose, as it has both time delay, but worse where it 'guesses' the word being spoken, a bit like when a supermarket sends butter to replace toilet cleaner!
If chairing from the Guildhall the chair needs a dedicated microphone and deal with feedback
It's one of the positives that has come out of this terrible pandemic
N/A
nice to be asked
No
No
No
NO
No
No
No. Remote meetings really work and have been a useful advancement
None
None.
opportunity to make a real change and ensure we can recruit and retain staff for the future
remote working is fine as an ad hoc, but it does seem to restrict member participation
Some more training on shared screen working
The ability to attend meetings remotely is clearly a benefit and will enable time to be managed
There are many reasons why I support remote meetings which I wish we could continue.

These questions are optional, but we need to ask them to understand if our consultation has reached the right people and to understand how different groups may be affected by the draft strategy allowing us to address this if we can. The personal information which you have provided on this form will be kept securely by Swansea Council for a fixed period after the end of the consultation and will not be made public or shared with any third parties. For further information on how Swansea Council handles personal data, please see our privacy notice at www.swansea.gov.uk/privacynotice

Q13   **Are you...?**
24 (57.1%) Male
18 (42.9%) Female

Q14   **Is your gender the same as that which you were assigned at birth?**
43 (100.0%)   Yes
0 (0.0%) No

Q15   **How old are you …**

0 (0.0%)   Under 16
0 (0.0%)   16 - 25
2 (4.7%)   26 - 35
4 (9.3%)   36 - 45
9 (20.9%)   46 - 55

9 (20.9%)   56 - 65
15 (34.9%) 66 - 75
4 (9.3%)   76 - 85
0 (0.0%)   Over 85
0 (0.0%)   Prefer not to say

Q16   **Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?**
Please mark all that apply

6 (15.4%)   Understand spoken Welsh
1 (2.6%)   Speak Welsh
4 (10.3%)   Read Welsh

1 (2.6%)   Write Welsh
7 (17.9%)   Learning Welsh
25 (64.1%) None of these

Q17   **Which languages do you use from day to day?**
Please mark all that apply

41 (100.0%)   English
1 (2.4%) Welsh
0 (0.0%) Other (write in)
Please write in
0 (0.0%)

Q18   **Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?**
By long-standing we mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over time.
This could also be defined Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as: "Having a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities."

5 (12.5%) Yes
35 (87.5%) No

Q19   **Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?**
3 (9.1%) Yes
30 (90.9%) No

<div style="background-color:red;color:white;text-align:center;">Thank you for your participation</div>

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Special Democratic Services Committee – 27 September 2021

Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022

Purpose:	To consider the draft Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022.
Policy Framework:	Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Statutory Guidance.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that the Committee:

1) Identifies any further training that should form part of the Councillor Induction and Training Programme 2022.

2) Identifies what elements of the Programme should be mandatory.

3) Recommends the Draft Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022 to Council for adoption.

Report Author:	Huw Evans
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

1.1 It is important that a Councillor Induction & Training Programme is in place prior to the Local Government elections on 6 May 2022. The programme is aimed at new and returning Councillors and Statutory Co-opted Members.

1.2 It is essential that Councillors receive adequate training to understand the role to which they have been elected, enabling them to undertake their role in their Ward and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities when undertaking their role as a Councillor.

1.3   In April 2021 the WLGA published "A Development Framework for Councillors in Wales 2021". This document outlines the knowledge and behaviours expected of Councillors in Wales and is a useful tool to identify suitable training needs both tailored towards all Councillors and more directed training i.e. Chair / Cabinet Member training. The Framework is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but can be locally adapted. A copy of this document was included on the Democratic Services Committee agenda of 19 July 2021.

2.   Democratic Services Committee Working Group

2.1   The Democratic Services Committee of 19 July 2021 set up a Democratic Services Committee Working Group to consider the Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022.

2.2   The Working Group met on 26 August 2021. The notes are attached as **Appendix A**.

2.3   The Working Group emphasised the importance of training. Many Councillors may find the training overwhelming initially; however, it will assist Councillors greatly over time.

2.4   Following the Working Group, additional comments were forwarded to the Head of Democratic Services:

i)   Communications & Social Media. Important that Councillors understand the importance of this.
ii)   eLearning modules specifically designed as refreshers that Councillors can access at any time.
iii)   The Market Place Event should be based in the Brangwyn Hall, allowing ample space for all.
iv)   Using MS PowerPoint more sparingly, and when doing so make better use of it e.g. when explaining the structure of the council can reveal a line at a time starting with the Director, then Heads of Service etc.
v)   Practical help sessions on getting to grips in using Council emails, Oracle, MS Teams, the Council website, etc.

2.5   **Suggestions for Learning & e-Learning**

i)   Decisions for future generations - the WBFGA (Well-Being & Future Generations (Wales) Act).
ii)   Introduction to Licensing.
iii)   Introduction to Audit and Risk.
iv)   Respect, Equalities and Diversity.
v)   Violence against women domestic abuse and sexual violence.
vi)   Working with the community and casework.
vii)   Time and workload management.

3. **Draft Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022**

3.1 **Appendix B** sets out the topics to be included in the Draft Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022. Subject to Committee agreement, the Draft Programme shall be recommended to Council for approval and then dates and times added, to complete the Programme.

3.2 Once, approved, the Programme will be included in the Candidates Nomination Packs for those standing for election to Swansea Council.

4. **Integrated Assessment Implications**

4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

4.4 An IIA Screening Form has been completed and no adverse implications have been noted. The Committee is being asked to identify and support councillor training which will have a positive impact on the community as a whole ensuring that councillors are able to undertake work within the community and the council and make decisions which benefit the community as a whole.

5.   Financial Implications

5.1   The costs associated with the Councillor Induction & Training Programme
        will be met from existing budget provision.

6.   Legal Implications

6.1   Section 7 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires Local
        Authorities to secure the provision of reasonable training and development
        opportunities for its members.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A   Notes of the Democratic Services Committee Working Group
                  held on 26 August 2021
Appendix B   Draft Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022.

Democratic Services Committee Working Group – 26 August 2021

Councillor Induction Programme 2022

Present:

Councillors Wendy Lewis, Erika Kirchner, Sue Jones, Lesley Walton

Officers:
Huw Evans, Allison Lowe, Jeremy Parkhouse

1.   Induction Programme:

i)   Try to avoid "Death by PowerPoint" – need more focused / dynamic presentations (difficult to manage as subject matter experts are not experts in providing training and there is no budget to provide each session in various different learning styles);

ii)   Sessions should be no longer than 60 – 90 minutes;

iii)   Timing of training sessions - will be held in the day time and early evening (for those who work / have caring responsibilities);

iv)   Consider renaming programme eg Councillor Induction & Review Training (need to make it clear that it is for all Councillors, not just new Councillors);

v)   Copy of the Induction Programme will be included in the Nomination Packs for Candidates and be on a brightly coloured paper so it stands out;

vi)   Manage expectations of new Councillors - Include a note on the Induction programme to explain it may seem overwhelming at the start, but not to worry, if you are unsure – ask (e.g. Mentor) and training will be re-run later on in year;

vii)   Need to stress the importance of all training – in particular Mandatory Training / role as Corporate Parent and as a representative of Swansea;

viii) E-learning will compliment and will consider compiling recordings of some sessions where possible (WLGA working on programme and Councillors have been asked to assist where possible);

ix)   Communications & Social media session – more important now. Consider 2 separate sessions – 1. Social Media, 2. Dealing with the media / press enquiries;

x)   Useful social media tips – some comments can be hurtful and harmful to others – consider leaving until morning to re-consider response. When responding, do so carefully and sensibly. Remember, vocal minority, silent majority.

2. Market Place Event

i)   Generally well received and should be repeated. Need consideration of alternative in respect of Covid-19 restrictions at that time e.g. on-line alternative;

ii)   Consider alternative / bigger venue than George Hall – too cramped and very noisy. Brangwyn Hall was suggested;

iii)   Consider map of Market Place event with names of Officers who will be present on each stall;

iv)   Re-run later on in year e.g. October / November.

3. Other things to consider

i)   Mentoring – by Democratic Services / Elections Officers;

ii)   Consider alternative option to Members Lounge for social & learning experience between new & existing Councillors;

iii)   Useful contacts list;

iv)   IT provision (separate report to DSC then Council) – need to re-consider the opt in / out system (noted that those in receipt of Senior Salary payments have recently received Council IT kit as well as being able to claim for purchasing their own – deemed unfair to other Councillors);

v)   Allowances – encourage those to claim what they are entitled to – to be considered further by DSC.

4. Agreed that:

i)   The Induction Programme for 2022 be provided in May / June following the LGE and then re-run in October / November.

ii)   Market Place event be provided in May following the LGE & re-run later on in year (subject to covid-19 restrictions).

iii)   HoDS to forward previous Induction programme to CMT / HoS to establish if any additional/amended sessions need to be included or if any can be removed;

iv)   Councillors to forward any other comments to HoDS (Huw Evans) by 3 September 2021.

	Date	Time	Topic	Venue	Lead Officer(s)
**Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022**				
1		Following Count Results	Signing Acceptance of Office & Councillors Code of Conduct		
2			Distribute Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Councillors Guide		
3			Photographs for Councillor ID Cards		
4			Allocation of Liaison Officer – DS Team		
5			**Market Place Event**	Brangwyn Hall	
6			Introduction to Interests, Gifts, Hospitality, Code of Conduct & Standards Committee including Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Guidance (Use PSOW YouTube Video) **(Compulsory)**		
7			Local Government Finance		
8			Local Government Finance (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
9			Good Decision Making / Bias / Pre-determination & Rules of Natural Justice **(Compulsory)**		
10			Well-being of Future Generations Act Induction Workshop for Councillors		
11			Good Decision Making / Bias / Pre-determination & Rules of Natural Justice (For Councillors who missed the previous session) **(Compulsory)**		
12			Well-being of Future Generations Act Induction Workshop for Councillors		
13			Data Protection Training and FOI Training Cllrs as Data Controllers (ICO) **(Compulsory)**		

14			Licensing Committee Training (Mandatory for Licensing Committee Members) (Councillors who miss this training will have to receive individual training from Officers) **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
15			Licensing Committee Training - HMO / Street Trading (Mandatory for Licensing Committee Members) (Councillors who miss this training will have to receive individual training from Officers) **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
16			Planning Committee Training (Mandatory for Planning Committee Members) (Councillors who miss this training will have to receive individual training from Officers) **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
17			Planning Committee Training - Rights of Way & Commons & Village Green Status Training (Mandatory for Planning Committee Members) (Councillors who miss this training will have to receive individual training from Officers) **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
18			Recruitment & Selection Training - Appointments Committee / Council **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
19			Communications and Social Media		
20			Introduction to Scrutiny & Scrutiny Questioning Skills **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
21			Licensing Committee Training (For Councillors who missed the previous sessions) (Mandatory for Licensing Committee Members) **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
22			Cllrs Allowances and Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW), Cllrs Self-Serve - Claims for Travel, Subsistence Allowances & Councillors Handbook		

23			Cllrs Allowances and Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW), Cllrs Self-Serve - Claims for Travel, Subsistence Allowances & Councillors Handbook		
24			Introduction to Scrutiny & Scrutiny Questioning Skills (For Councillors who missed the previous session) **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
25			Children's Rights (UNCRC)		
26			Governance & Audit Committee Training **(Compulsory for Committee Members)** • Introduction to Governance & Audit Committee • Risk Management		
27			Communications and Social Media (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
28			Chairs Training for Council and Committees		
			Introduction to Interests, Gifts, Hospitality, Code of Conduct & Standards Committee including Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Guidance) **(Compulsory)**		
29			Children's Rights (UNCRC) (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
30			Domestic Abuse Awareness **(Compulsory)**		
31			Dementia Awareness		
32			Governance & Audit Committee Training **(Compulsory for Committee Members)** CIPFA knowledge and skills framework		
33			An Introduction to the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership (to be confirmed)		
34			Dementia Awareness (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
35			Equalities / Welsh Language Training		
36			Scams Awareness Training		

37			Scams Awareness Training		
38			Safeguarding Adults Training **(Compulsory)**		
39			Safeguarding and Protection of Children Training **(Compulsory)**		
40			Equalities / Welsh Language Training (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
41			Planning Training – **All Councillors** (In respect of planning applications referred to Council) (Councillors who miss this training will have to receive individual training from Officers)		
42			An Introduction to the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership (to be confirmed) (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
43			Corporate Parenting Training **(Compulsory)**		
44			Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act		
45			Governance & Audit Committee Training **(Compulsory for Committee Members)** • Internal Audit • Governance		
46			Safeguarding Adults Training **(Compulsory)** • (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
47			Safeguarding and Protection of Children Training **(Compulsory)** (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
48			Domestic Abuse Awareness **(Compulsory)** (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
49			Extremism & Radicalisation		
50			Extremism & Radicalisation (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		
51			Governance & Audit Committee Training **(Compulsory for Committee Members)** • External Audit		

52			Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act		
53			An Introduction to Education Consortia		
54			Corporate Parenting Training **(Compulsory)** (For Councillors who missed the previous session)		

55			**Regional Induction workshops for new Councillors** *WLGA 5 regional workshops: New Councillors New Challenges.* *To include:*
			• *Cabinet Secretary Mark Drakeford AM*
			• *Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe*
			• *WLGA Chief Executive*
			• *Sessions on:*
			   o *Key Behaviours for Successful Councillors*
			   o *Digital Councillors*		

56			Welfare / Citizens Advice Training		
57			Disciplinary & Disciplinary Investigation Training **(Compulsory for Committee Members)**		
58			Social Inclusion / Tackling Poverty Training		
59			Member Led Authority		
60			Prevention		

Note: Compulsory Training defined by Council on xxx

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Special Democratic Services Committee – 27 September 2021

Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings

Purpose:	To consider the Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings.
Policy Framework:	Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and Interim Statutory Guidance.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that:
1)	The Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings be noted.
2)	The Head of Democratic Services prepare a Multi-Location Meetings Policy.
Report Author: **Finance Officer:** **Legal Officer:** **Access to Services Officer:**	Huw Evans Ben Smith Tracey Meredith Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

1.1 The Welsh Government has published Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings. These are permitted under S47 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

1.2 Multi-location meetings offer authorities the potential to update and transform the way they do business. It allows Local Authorities to become more flexible and efficient and raise their profile in the local community and to bring their work directly into people's homes. Public access to multi-location meetings is likely to be significantly higher than the level of audiences of formal meetings when all were held physically.

1.3 A Multi-Location Meeting is a meeting of the relevant authority (Principal Council) whose participants are not all in the same physical place. These are often referred to as Remote or Hybrid Meetings.

2.   Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings

2.1   The Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings (May 2021) is outlined at **Appendix A**. It may also be viewed at https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/interim-statutory-guidance-on-multi-location-meetings.pdf

2.2   The Authority must set out the details of its arrangements for Multi-Location Meetings. These arrangements must be guided by a number of general principles. The Head of Democratic Services will prepare a Policy for the Committee to consider and will also consider whether any amendments need to be made to the Council Constitution.

3.   Integrated Assessment Implications

3.1   The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.2   The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

3.3   Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

3.4   An IIA Screening Form has been completed and no adverse implications have been noted. The Committee is being asked to identify and support councillor training which will have a positive impact on the community as a whole ensuring that councillors are able to undertake work within the

community and the council and make decisions which benefit the community as a whole.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Apart from the costs of equipping the Council Chamber, Guildhall and Gloucester Room from the digital democracy fund there are no directly associated costs with any new policy.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 Section 47 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides for attendance at local authority meetings. It specifically provides that an authority must make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that local authority meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meetings.

5.2 The Act also provides that where a meeting is required to be broadcast and is open to the public (council, a committee or sub-committee of council, Cabinet, a committee or sub-committee of Cabinet, a Joint Committee of 2 or more councils, then members should be able to speak to and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by each other.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:
Appendix A   Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings.

Interim statutory guidance on multi-location meetings

Further to section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

May 2021

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Purpose of this guidance

This is interim guidance to support the provision of multi-location meetings for principal councils, which means county and county borough councils, National park authorities, fire and rescue authorities, and Port health authorities in Wales (referred to as relevant authorities). This is covered by section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which we refer to as "the 2021 Act". This guidance will continue to be developed in light of the operation and experience of implementing the provisions of the 2021 Act and will be incorporated into a wider set of guidance which is being prepared to address a range of other provisions contained within the 2021 Act.

The overall purpose of the Welsh Government in amending the law to give relevant authorities powers and freedoms to convene meetings in this way is to achieve greater accessibility and improved public participation in local government. These powers are closely connected with the new requirement for principal councils to broadcast (by audio and/or video) certain meetings. This responsibility to broadcast is not covered directly in this guidance and will not come in to force until May 2022.

Multi-location meetings offer authorities the potential to update and transform the way they do business. It provides an opportunities for authorities to become more flexible and efficient and also raise their profile in the local community and to bring their work directly into people's homes. Public access to multi-location meetings is likely to be significantly higher than the level of audiences of formal meetings when all were held physically – attendance levels during the pandemic bear this out. This heightened public awareness and involvement is to be welcomed – and further encouraged. In particular, authorities will need to think directly about the needs of the public as they design their arrangements and policies for multi-location meetings. While these meetings are still "meetings in public" rather than "public meetings" – by and large the public will be able to observe but not participate – they provide a crucial opportunity for accountability and transparency, and an accessible shop window for many public bodies.

This guidance is for principal councils, National park authorities, fire and rescue authorities, and port health authorities. This guidance does not cover the arrangement by other public bodies of their own formal meetings, or the organisation by public bodies (including councils) of public meetings or any other gathering. It also does not include the convening of formal meetings by corporate joint committees (CJCs) or community councils, on which separate guidance is being prepared.

This guidance is intended for:

- Participants in meetings convened by the authorities listed above;
- Officers providing support to formal meetings in these authorities;
- 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.

Generally speaking the requirements for all relevant authorities is similar, although differences do exist – especially relating to the convening of multi-location meetings of local authority executives, which is covered in section 4.3.

Relevant authorities are required to "have regard to" the guidance. Where authorities are under an existing statutory obligation to carry out an act the guidance says that they "must" do something; where there is no such obligation but the guidance presents a suggestion on a possible course of action, the guidance says that a council "can" or "may" do something.

1.2   How this guidance was developed

This guidance was developed between February and April 2021. It was drafted by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, Cardiff University and Public Governance Wales, who were commissioned by Welsh Government to speak to people with a stake and interest in this area and to develop the text as a result of these conversations.

This is interim guidance, which will be reviewed and where necessary amended in May 2022 based on the experiences of relevant authorities, and the public.

1.3   Definitions of words used in this document

Generally, the words used in this guidance have the same meaning as they do in the 2021 Act.

A "relevant authority" is an organisation which is required to put in place arrangements for multi-location meetings. This covers principal councils, fire and rescue authorities, National parks authorities and port health authorities. It also includes joint committees of these bodies. The obligations of corporate joint committees (CJCs) and of community and town councils are covered in separate guidance.

A "meeting" is a formal meeting of a relevant authority convened in accordance with whatever the legal requirements are for such meetings. Formal meetings are usually those where formal decisions can be made; these meetings may need to be held in public and that notice is published beforehand that they are being held. This is not always the case as some meetings, or parts of meetings, are held in private due to confidentiality or exempt issues being discussed. When we talk about these meetings being "convened", we mean the process involved in organising the meeting and setting and distributing an agenda and reports.

A "multi-location meeting" is a meeting of a relevant authority whose participants are not all in the same physical place. In some places these are colloquially described as "remote" meetings. The 2021 Act does not refer to these meetings as "remote", but that they are attended by "persons who are not in the same place".

At least one participant may be joining the meeting by remote means. For example, this includes meetings of the type described below:

- Meetings of a committee where all participants are in the same physical location except one individual who joins from another location, with a physical public gallery being provided;
- Meetings of a committee where a roughly equal number of members are present in a physical space and joining through remote means; those joining through remote means may include the Chair;
- Meetings of a committee where all members are joining through remote means but nonetheless a physical public gallery has been made available in authority premises;
- Meetings of a committee taking place wholly through remote means where no physical arrangements have been made.

Some have described the kinds of meetings described above as "hybrid meetings". This guidance and Section 47 of the 2021 Act makes no distinction between meetings where some participants join by remote means and those where all participants do so, but meeting

arrangements will need to account for the practical differences that different forms of meetings will take, and make plans accordingly.

The definition of "Joining a meeting by remote means" is being in a different physical location to that of other participants, and participating through an online meeting platform. Where participants are present in a committee room or other physical space which is publicised (through a formal notice) as being the location of the meeting, those participants are present physically.

A "participant" of a multi-location meeting is a person who takes an active part in that meeting. They might be a 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.

An "observer" of a multi-location meeting is 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.

"Meeting arrangements" are the rules and procedures that relevant authorities adopt to act on their statutory requirements relating to multi-location meetings, and to act on the recommendations in this guidance. This guidance suggests that these arrangements will form part of relevant authorities' constitutions, where they are required.

1.4   Background to multi-location meetings

Arrangements were first made in legislation to allow for "remote meetings" in section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

At the outset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, the Welsh Government produced the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020. These established a framework within which all relevant authorities convened meetings by remote means throughout 2020 and part of 2021. Experience operating meetings under these Regulations has provided relevant authorities with significant expertise in understanding and managing multi-location meetings, now they have been placed on a new statutory footing. The provisions in the 2021 Act can be seen as an evolution of these prior arrangements.

1.5   The benefits of multi-location meetings

Councils, and other relevant authorities, have been convening all their meetings by remote means throughout much of 2020 and 2021. While meeting this way has proven challenging in the context of the global coronavirus pandemic, it has also resulted in a number of benefits.

- Enhancing and supporting local democracy. Having the flexibility to convene meetings in this way will reduce the barriers that might previously have been in place for explaining and demonstrating how relevant authorities do business;
- Working more productively. When participants come together by remote means, they have often been able to get more done. Multi-location meetings have also resulted in a dramatic reduction in the amount of paper needed and produced. The move to an approach which sees the production of formal notices and other material as being "online by default" will make it easier for councils to innovate around the use of formal meeting material;
- Making it easier for the public to attend meetings. Although experiences have been mixed, public attendance has been higher for multi-location meetings than for meetings in person. Some relevant authorities, in particular, found both before and during the pandemic that multi-location meetings have made it possible to include external participants actively, ensuring that committees can benefit from a greater range of views. Relevant authorities have reported that members of the public think that multi-

location meetings are much less intimidating than those held in person, and that they have the potential to encourage more people to stand for public office. For some though, multi-location meetings will also present challenges – for example, those with poor broadband connections or disabled people unable to access meetings over the internet for other reasons;

- Making relevant authorities more resilient and sustainable in how they carry out their work. 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. Issues of sustainability are explored in more detail below;

- Making the use of the Welsh medium easier. Relevant authorities' experience during 2020 has been that the simultaneous translation on platforms such as Zoom has reduced some of the practical difficulties which some authorities have experienced around facilitating bilingualism in public meetings.

- Reducing the need for travel. For more rural relevant authorities and for relevant authorities covering large geographical areas and for joint bodies, significant time and cost savings for councillors, officers and other participants have arisen. In turn, this makes it easier for participants to take part if they have professional and caring commitments – potentially removing some significant barriers to standing for public office. ;

- Better support for members from diverse backgrounds, including support that recognises the social model of disability. Just as barriers are being removed to public participation, multi-location meetings have made it easier for care providers, or disabled people, or people with other protected characteristics, to engage on an equal footing. In some cases, participants have found the formality of physical meetings to be off putting, and multi-location meetings have removed this factor. Of course, this raises broader issues around the way that relevant authorities work generally, and the extent to which they welcome participation and involvement from a wide range of people. These are not matters which will be resolved through multi-location meetings alone, but such meetings could be a tool that will, in due course, help a wider range of people to take an active role in local democracy;
Better behaviours. Although experiences have been mixed, on the whole meeting management and the behaviours of participants have both improved. It has been easier for Chairs of meetings to understand who wants to make a contribution, although it is harder to read body language. Disruption of meetings by political argument (for example) seems to have been less of a theme as well.

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. **All meetings that meet the required communication and quorate arrangements have equal status under the law.**

For some, there have been drawbacks to multi-location meetings. In particular, people have had worries about the need for more council officers to support them. In time, ongoing experience is likely to improve this and reduce the amount of resource required to support them.

1.6   What this guidance covers

This guidance focuses particularly on arrangements for the convening of formal meetings held by relevant authorities under the 2021 Act , and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2001 as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

. Guidance for principal councils on broadcasting these meetings, where required in law, is being provided separately.

Together, this legislation updates arrangements for the management of these meetings and enhances transparency and public access.

This guidance also engages with other enactments relating to this issue, as well as with the wider local democratic context within which the Act sits.

This guidance focuses particularly on arrangements for the convening and broadcast   of formal local authority meetings. Provisions relating to local authority meetings are included in various pieces of legislation, including but not limited to:

- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

- The Local Government Act 2000

- The Local Government Act 1972

- The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2001 as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.The National Park Authorities (Wales) Order 1995

- The North Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995

- The Mid and West Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995

- The South Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995

Chapter 4 of Part 3 of the 2021 Act covers meetings convened by relevant authorities, as well as by certain other bodies and organisations. In respect of principal councils, community and town councils, National parks authorities, fire and rescue authorities and port health authorities, it covers:
- Electronic broadcasts of meetings. Principal councils must make arrangements for broadcasting certain meetings live, and ensuring that broadcasts are available electronically afterwards. A failure to comply with this requirement does not necessarily make proceedings invalid (s46). Separate Regulations and guidance are being prepared on this matter;
- Attendance at meetings: Relevant authorities must make arrangements for "multi-location" meetings, at which participants can speak to and be heard by each other. Where meetings must be broadcast participants must also be able to see each other (s47);
- Notice of meetings, and publication of agendas: Relevant authorities must publish certain information, including notices of meetings, electronically, and electronic information relating to meetings must remain available in this format for six years following the date of the meeting (Part 1 of Schedule 4 to the 2021 Act, amending the

Local Government Act 1972). Relevant authorities must also put in place facilities for the public who would otherwise not be able to do so, to access meeting documents.

Arrangements for the broadcast of meetings (physical or multi-location) held by relevant authorities is explored in separate Regulations and will come into force in May 2022 and separate guidance will apply. . However, relevant authorities are likely to need to consider the requirement to broadcast alongside the need to make provision for multi-location meetings. This is the reason for suggesting that meeting arrangements take account of both requirements.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Relevant authorities will need to think about and agree independently the details of their own arrangements for multi-location meetings. In doing so, they should be guided by the following general principles.

All of the below relate to legal obligations. In developing meeting arrangements, relevant authorities will need to explicitly assure themselves that these principles are understood, taken into account and acted on, possibly through being the subject of specific discussion at meetings to ensure standing orders are amended by Democratic Services Committee or other bodies in relevant authorities.

Of paramount importance are the needs of local democracy. Local people need to have confidence that relevant authorities have systems in place that meet their needs – this might be about observing meetings, participating in them, and using this to hold to account a meeting's participants for what they see and do. Relevant authorities' approach to multi-location meetings has to be seen as part of the wider support and commitment to local democracy. The other principles described below need to be considered in light of this.

2.1 Transparency

Formal meetings of relevant authorities will be spaces in which democratic debate and decision-making happen. It is fundamental that these meetings are held in public (subject to the specific exceptions available), and that the public are able to access and engage with them. Relevant authorities will need to think about wider legal requirements around transparency, and accessibility, and what that means for the way that they carry out meetings. These meetings allow public and media involvement as observers whether they are held in person or virtually.

(Local Government Act 1972, s100 et seq., Schedule 12 and 12A and related legislation)

2.2 Accessibility

Democratic systems need to be organised and arranged to account for barriers that members of the public might experience. Multi-location meetings have the potential to enhance and improve access for participants. This will not happen automatically however, and meeting arrangements will need to be specifically designed to help this to happen.

Relevant authorities' meeting arrangements will need to have regard for the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, including ensuring that accessibility is considered in the context of the social model of disability, and for ensuring that the impact of its decisions on democratic arrangements are understood from these perspectives.

(Equality Act 2010)

2.3 Good conduct

In line with the Nolan Principles, multi-location meetings, as with any other public meeting, should demonstrate high standards of conduct.

Multi-location meetings have in many places led to changes in conduct, and an improvement in behaviours. Meeting arrangements can account for the need to entrench more positive behaviours – particularly where these meetings involve a number of people together in a single physical location, where different dynamics may arise.

Relevant authorities will also need to have regard to the Model Code of Conduct (and to local codes of conduct, and standards arrangements) in how they develop their meeting arrangements.

The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) Order 2008.2.4 Use of English and Welsh Languages

Adherence to legal requirements relating to the use of the English and Welsh languages is a legal requirement. It is a fundamental element of the obligations attached to public bodies in Wales – separate legislation and guidance exists. In order to maximise accessibility relevant authorities may wish to consider subtitling in English and/or Welsh, and translation into other languages depending on need – for example, BSL.

Arrangements must ensure that English and Welsh are treated equally and support and promote the Welsh Language. The use of the Welsh medium can be provided for in multi-location meetings – and normalised in a wide range of settings – in ways which might historically have proven challenging for physical meetings. Relevant authorities will also need to take account of their individual Welsh language standards.

(Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011)

2.5 Local Needs

Local authorities are democratic institutions. Decisions about local democracy – and the best approaches to promote and encourage engagement in local democratic systems – are best made at a local level. Relevant authorities' approaches to meeting arrangements should therefore be aligned with the way that they approach public participation – in particular, their plans for ensuring that they meet their public participation obligations when these obligations become law in May 2022. An understanding of the specific needs of a wide range of local people is a part of this.

(Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, on public participation).

2.6 Future generations

In agreeing arrangements for meetings, relevant authorities must give regard to the well-being goals and ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Many of the improvements which could be brought about by multi-location meetings – innovation around the transaction or meetings, reductions in the use of paper, enhanced public accessibility and so on – will serve the objective of making local democratic systems more sustainable.

However, relevant authorities will still need to ensure that the 2015 Act's principles are actively embedded in arrangements for meetings. Digitisation has the potential to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of local democratic systems, but only where cloud services and server storage is procured from carbon neutral providers – digital services are not carbon neutral by default. The reduction in travel will also add to the reduction in the carbon footprint.

3.   CORE REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the things that relevant authorities *must* do in relation to multi-location meetings.

These provisions are set out to help ensure legal compliance. In all respects it will be for a relevant authority's Monitoring Officer to determine exactly how the authority will ensure this compliance. The expectation is that relevant authorities will want to use these requirements as a starting point from which to innovate and experiment with different arrangements for facilitating multi-location meetings, in the context of the wider needs of local democracy.

The Act requires that "arrangements" be made by principal councils for both the broadcasting of meetings, and the convening of meetings involving participants in multiple locations. These "meeting arrangements" will need to be written in such a way that integrates a relevant authority's approach to multi-location arrangements to its wider compliance with the legislative framework for formal meetings, including the new requirements for the audio and (in certain circumstances) video broadcasting of such meetings.

Although, there is a requirement for principal councils to broadcast certain meetings which will not commence until May 2022, many principal councils already broadcast a number of their meetings, we therefore suggest that these arrangements form an integrated part of an authority's Constitution. For principal councils such arrangements might be subject to oversight from the Democratic Services Committee.

The reason for integrating these arrangements into a constitutional document is that they set out how the authority is run, and will need to be integrated in some form into the rules of procedure of committees and other formal bodies.

Relevant authorities will need to develop these arrangements for themselves – there is no single set of rules setting out what arrangements should look like in detail. This guidance sets out a framework within which relevant authorities can explore their options and decide what is right for them and the communities they serve.

4.   PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section sets out things to which relevant authorities must give regard, but which do not form part of the legislative framework.

Welsh Government considers these considerations to be matters of good practice. Some specific solutions are suggested but relevant authorities should consider local circumstances in deciding what approaches are ultimately adopted, in a process which should be led by those involved in participating in meetings, and supporting those meetings' operation – always informed by the needs and expectations of the public. While meeting arrangements should fit local preferences and circumstances, there should be a clear process for considering the issues highlighted below. For local authorities The Democratic Services Committee is expected to lead this process.

Sitting alongside the core requirements of the "meeting arrangements" – the legally mandated arrangements that relevant authorities must make for multi-location meetings – can be a wider multi-location meetings policy, which will also reflect the general principles in section 2 while setting out more detailed procedures to ensure that multi-location meetings work efficiently, effectively and accountably. Keeping such a policy distinct from the legal "meeting arrangements" is important because it will make it clear to those involved where processes are put in place because of legal requirements, and where local decisions have been made about the operation of multi-location meetings.

Relevant authorities can take whatever process they choose in designing and adopting this policy, but those responsible for leadership on governance matters, and participants in multi-location meetings, will need to be satisfied that these arrangements take into account the general principles we set out in section 2. In particular, the meetings policy will be the document to refer to the role of the public in the operation of formal meetings, and to ensure that their needs and expectations are understood and treated as paramount.

Because of the public-facing nature of this work relevant authorities may consider it necessary to adopt a provisional policy, and for those within that authority and outside it (in particular, the public) to develop and refine it over time. Reviewing the policy (and of the meeting arrangements themselves) as they operate will offer the best opportunity to reflect and refine.

Where a relevant authority determines that they wish to draft such a policy it should be led by a committee of the authority with a responsibility for governance, supported by a relevant officer. This might be that authority's Monitoring Officer. Where the authority is a principal council, the decision would be made by the cabinet and the officer taking leadership might properly by the Head of Democratic Services.

The exact contents of a policy will be agreed at local level. The experience of relevant authorities in the past however suggests that it should include:

- How to decide which meetings will have physical provision made for them, and which will be conducted wholly through remote means. (section 4.1);
- Which online meeting platform or platforms which will be used (section 4.2);
- How formal notices will be issued, and the publication of agendas and minutes (section 4.3);
- How exempt matters will be dealt with (section 4.3);
- Meeting attendance, including deciding where a member is "present" (section 4.4);
- How participants who sit as part of committees or bodies subject to the Act will be able to access and participate in the meeting (including support and advice on technology, behavioural and conduct issues) (section 4.5);
- How observers (including the public and the press) will be able to access the meeting, and how they may actively participate in the meeting where needed (4.6);
- Facilitating broadcast by members of the public (4.7). Broadcast by the authority itself may also be required, and is covered by separate guidance.
- Chairing of meetings (4.8)
- The taking of votes (4.9);
- Training and peer support to ensure that participants are able to take part (4.10)

It is important to ensure that participants and observers have access to easy to understand information which explains how they can and should engage in multi-location meetings – this documentation can be part of the multi-location meetings policy but should also be available separately, and may constitute a simple explanation of some of those arrangements for the casual reader. It is particularly important the relevant authorities highlight and publicise their multi-location meeting arrangements and policy to make it as easy as possible for the public to engage.

4.1 Taking different approaches for different meetings
Some relevant authorities may decide that all meetings will be conducted through remote means by default. Relevant authorities may wish to adopt different approaches for different bodies, and for different circumstances.

<u>In general</u>

A multi-location meetings policy may make provision that different kinds of meeting be convened, by default, with all participants joining through remote means, or with some arrangement being made for people to attend and participate and observe in person. Policies should recognise that the Act requires participants to be able to join meetings through remote means for all formal meetings. It will not be permitted for relevant authorities to decide that all meetings will be held entirely physically.

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 on this issue 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.

Relevant authorities may want to make particular plans for multi-location meetings where a number of participants are in the same physical space, while others join through remote means. Similarly, provisions might need to be made for allowing people to observe in person, or through remote means, or both.

There is no requirement for each meeting to be held in the same way every time it meets. For example, a council could decide to hold some full council meetings entirely remotely and others as multi-location meetings with a number of councillors (or most councillors) present in a chamber. In determining which meetings may be held wholly through remote meetings and for which physical arrangements might be made available, relevant authorities might consider:

- The general circumstances of participants. Participants' needs and preferences may change over time, and policies should have the flexibility to allow for arrangements to change where this happens. For example, councillors in a local authority may decide that full Council should take place predominantly physically or predominantly through remote means – but in doing so they might ensure that the policy remains flexible enough to change this approach if participants' views change;
- The subject matter, and number of participants attending, certain meetings. This may relate to the general matters usually under discussion at a given committee (or other body) rather than the specific agenda for an individual meeting;
- The need to ensure that meetings are fully accessible to both active participants and to observers. Accessibility may under certain circumstances require physical provision;
- Connected to this, whether physical provision for a public gallery, or for the attendance of certain participants, is necessary if the majority of a meeting's participants are joining through remote means. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.7;

The overriding need is to consider the needs of the public, both as observers and participants.

Relevant authorities may have concerns about equality of access and participation in multi-location meetings where some participants are in the same physical space. On considering the risks and other circumstances they may determine that, by default, meetings can take place either wholly by remote means, or that, where a number of participants express a preference for a meeting being held physically, that support should be given to all participants to attend physically. However it is worth reiterating that relevant authorities will not be able to require that all participants attend physically under these circumstances.

Where a relevant authority decides that physical arrangements will be made for certain meetings or classes of meetings, a multi-location meetings policy will need to determine what those arrangements will be. They may include:

- The availability of a meeting room which is publicly accessible, along with the provision of a physical public gallery (and press gallery);
- Making arrangements for participants who attend physically to be seen by those joining from other locations (a requirement under the Act), which will require planning where multiple participants wish to attend physically and where camera facilities in a room may be less than ideal for this purpose;
- The availability of professional support in the room, or through remote means. This may be IT support or governance/clerking support;
- The streaming of broadcast footage from the meeting to those present through the use of one or more display screens (and the use of audio equipment).

Even where all participants join a meeting from another location a relevant authority may still wish to provide a physical space for members of the public to watch proceedings and to participate. This is covered in section 4.7 below.

Accessibility and involvement

Some participants may wish to join meetings from another location regularly – because they have working or caring responsibilities which make attending meetings in person difficult. Some participants may have a preference for physical meetings. Participants may have personal protected characteristics, or circumstances, which limit their ability to participate online, and/or which requires that certain accommodations be made for physical presence. The same needs are likely to apply to observers. Particular care will be needed to be taken to take account of the needs of one-off participants, especially if they are members of the public rather than employed officers of the authority or regular meeting participants who are (for example) elected councillors.

Multi-location meetings where some or most participants are present in a single location can pose challenges around accessibility and involvement. Those present in a committee room will need to be able to participate on the same footing as those participating in other locations. This may be a difficult where certain participants may be able to hear, but not see, other participants. For these kinds of meetings, there is a risk that those not physically present in a room play less of a part in discussion. These people may end up being "forgotten" by those who are physically present. For a Chair, following the visual cues of those in the same room, and those joining from other locations, is likely to be a challenge. This will need to be thought about, particularly where the Chair themselves is joining a meeting from another location.

4.2   Multi-location meeting platforms

Multi-location meetings require additional technology and this has implications for an authority's capacity to procure and use this technology effectively. Finding and using the right platform is an important part of making meetings accessible and transparent, and the business of relevant authorities more accountable to the public.

This guidance does not recommend any specific product. Relevant authorities have made, and will make, their own arrangements in line with their IT and procurement policies. It may be, for example, that relevant authorities wish to explore joint procurement opportunities. It will be useful for relevant authorities procuring to understand how the market for these products evolved, and the need to keep in touch with other relevant authorities to exchange experiences.

Specifically, any product, or combination of products, should provide:

- The ability for participants to be able to see and hear each other, and the facility for outbound and inbound video and audio to be switched on and off either by a participant themselves or potentially also for a meeting organiser;

- The ability for participants to be named / labelled so that others can easily identify them;
- The ability for participants and observers to be able to join via mobile, or tablet, without losing significant functionality;
- The ability to provide for simultaneous translation. Relevant authorities should ensure that they use a meeting platform which provides for simultaneous translation and that members are comfortable with its use. Principal councils will need to decide whether to broadcast a feed in English, in Welsh, or in both – this is covered in more detail in separate guidance on broadcast;
- The ability to both record and broadcast the meeting and for participants and observers to know when recording and broadcasting is taking place;
- The ability to caption or subtitle, either live (which may be partially or fully automated) or through editing after the meeting has taken place;
- A "chat" facility (the use of which we discuss in section 4.5 below), visible only to meeting participants, and which can be turned off by the meeting organiser if necessary;
- Sufficient security measures to ensure that the meeting cannot be accessed by unauthorised persons, and to ensure that unauthorised persons can be ejected from the meeting where necessary;
- A user interface which is intuitive and easily understood.

Other factors will include:

- Where and how meetings will be broadcast – for example, on the council's own website or on Facebook Live or YouTube, or in some other way (covered in separate guidance). It is not recommended that principal councils effect the broadcast requirement by granting public access to online meeting platforms themselves. Broadcast arrangements are dealt with in separate guidance, but again, the needs of the public as observers will be especially important;
- Arrangements where joint meetings are held between relevant authorities which, by default, use different platforms;
- Arrangements for when difficulties with technology emerge, or other circumstances might make it impossible to broadcast a meeting (covered in section 4.6);
- Provision for electronic voting.

Relevant authorities may wish to consult participants and observers to ensure that IT arrangements work for them, and that the technology means that multi-location meetings are as accessible as they could be.

4.3   Notices, agendas, reports and providing for exempt matters
Alongside multi-location meetings, relevant authorities will need to continue to issue notice of the convening of meetings, and make arrangements for the publication of agendas and reports, online. There are both issues and opportunities associated with this.

- Transparency around the work programmes of bodies covered by these rules. Agendas and papers are usually expected to be published three clear working days in advance of meetings (and the detail of notice requirements are covered in more detail in the section below), but relevant authorities may wish to consider how the interests of transparency and accessibility can be served by earlier notification of proposed agenda items – through more accessible and visible work programmes and through attention being given to the visibility and accuracy of a schedule of forthcoming decisions (which in the case of a principal council executive will be the Forward Plan);

- Arrangements to ensure that those viewing a broadcast can be easily signposted to the agenda, reports and (in the case of recorded meetings) the minutes, and to any relevant background documentation;

Full detail of notice requirements for meetings (and other formal requirements for the publication of agendas, reports and minutes) can now be found:

- For local authority executives, at the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2001 as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021;.
- For other meetings of relevant authorities, amendments made to Part 5A and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The principal object of these amendments to the existing legal framework is to remove the requirement for the production of hard copy paperwork relating to formal meetings (except for a couple of specific purposes), and to require relevant authorities to make formal information available electronically, on their website.

The new arrangements can be summarised as follows:

Notice of meetings

- Public notice of all meetings must be published on the relevant authority's website at least three clear days before the meeting (at the time it is convened, if it is convened at shorter notice);
- Notice must include details of how to access the meeting if it is being held by remote means only, and the place in which the meeting is held if it is partly or wholly taking place physically;
- Notice requirements also apply where a formal meeting is taking place which is not open to the public. Here, notification is required of the time of the meeting, the fact that it is being held by remote means, and that it is not open to the public.

Usually notice of meetings would be provided on an authority's website; relevant authorities may also make arrangements for notifications to be sent to members, and interested people via subscription, automatically on the uploading of agenda papers. Authorities may also make use of social media to highlight the publication of notice (although notification on social media will not constitute notice for the purposes of the Regulations).

Agendas and reports

- The agenda and reports for public meetings (including late reports) must be published on the website of the authority;
- Paper agendas do need to be made available to members of the public attending meetings held partly physically;
- For principal councils only; recording of decisions by the executive collectively or individually, as well as the recording of business carried out in other meetings of principal councils. This requires that the names of who attended the meeting be recorded alongside apologies, declarations of interest and decisions made. This must be published within 7 working days of the meeting taking place. In the interests of clarity this does not require that a member's or members' signatures are required to be recorded (as has been the case previously). The information referred to above must be published on relevant authorities' websites. ;
- Background papers relating to meetings of relevant authorities must now be proactively published on a website, not merely be available (although, exceptionally, if

it is impractical to do this, they must be open for public inspection). This is an important change; it involves the automatic placement in the public domain of specified documents which may previously have only been, in practice, published on application. Councils will therefore need to think carefully about how background papers are identified, produced and prepared for publication;

- The transaction of paperless business generally. Multi-location meetings are likely to be paperless. Regulations now specify that formal information relating to meetings be published on an authority' website, with the requirement of hard copy material being on public deposit having been removed;

There may be people who cannot access the information published electronically; principal councils must put in place facilities for members of the public who would not otherwise be able to do so, to access the documents.

Exempt matters

Bodies covered by the legislation will need to be able to consider exempt matters in private. Exempt matters are things which a relevant authority is allowed not to publish because they are confidential. This may be for a range of reasons, which are set out in schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Agendas with exempt items on the agenda are often divided into a Part I – held in public – and a Part II – held in private.

A separate call on the online platform, separate from the call used for broadcast, should be set up for those participating in a meeting by remote means. This reduces the risk that exempt material may be inadvertently made public through being broadcast. The original, public, call can be left open and can continue to broadcast (with an appropriate slide to notify viewers that the committee or body is in private session), so the Chair and other participants can return to formally close the meeting, or further business. This will allow relevant authorities to make clear to observers what is happening, and why.

Information provided to participants covering exempt matters should be dealt with in the same way as it would be for physical meetings. Bearing in mind that information will now be managed electronically by default under the notice and agenda arrangements highlighted above, relevant authorities may want to ensure that more prominent warnings be placed on exempt material, or whether a different colour can be applied to the background of such material to reflect the fact that, in hard copy, exempt material is usually printed on different colour paper for this reason. In doing so, relevant authorities will need to think about the accessibility needs of participants (around colour contrasts, for example).

Innovation in how agendas and paperwork are produced and presented

The removal of the general requirement to provide information in hard copy by default invites the possibility for more innovation and creativity. This is not innovation for its own sake, but innovation designed to better engage the public in the work of relevant authorities. Local people will be able to follow and track the way that discussions are had, and decisions made, entirely online. The removal of hard copy notices will allow relevant authorities to experiment with the use of technology to make navigating the decision-making process, in particular, easier.

Relevant authorities may wish to consider how information might be made more accessible through creative use of committee content management systems to present information differently – for example, by moving away from the production of "agenda report packs" as a single PDF and towards the use of more accessible files, and file formats, which help both councillors, other meeting participants and members of the public to engage in formal business. This may include thinking about the way that minutes are drafted and presented,

providing links to the substantive reports discussed, and also with the relevant section of the recording or broadcast of the meeting.

<u>Hard copy archiving</u>

Relevant authorities should however consider the needs of archiving. It is common practice that councils (and other relevant authorities) retain and bind, or otherwise store for historical purposes, hard copies of the records of formal proceedings of the authority. There is an obligation that formal information be retained for a period of six years although it is considered good practice to do so in perpetuity.

Archiving is likely to be possible and necessary for electronic documentation – agendas, reports, minutes, background papers and other information important for researchers, historians or others to understand how decisions have come to be made. Relevant authorities will need to think about how they build systems to make sure that material produced predominantly, or entirely, electronically will be archived.

4.4   Meeting attendance

Multi-location meetings provide additional challenges in terms of meeting attendance. It is important for the integrity of voting procedures and attendance records that expectations and procedures are clear.

Meeting arrangements and/or the meetings policy should make clear when a participant is considered to be "present". There are a variety of circumstances in which this might become an issue – for example, in the taking of votes. Meeting arrangements may not engage with the detail of these issues (and others) because not all circumstances can be anticipated in advance. Local determination is important here.

Instead, the Monitoring Officer and/or governance officer in attendance at a meeting should be able to use agreed principles to provide a Chair with consistent advice over whether a participant should or should not be regarded as "present".

This is particularly important for the taking of votes but is also relevant for participation in meetings more generally. It is likely also to have salience if the need to determine if a member has been present at a meeting is relevant for the purpose of determining whether they have attended a council meeting in the past six months (s85, Local Government Act 1972).

Particular circumstances might include:

- Connection problems. The connection may drop, making it difficult for some participants to follow debate and discussion. It may also disrupt a broadcast feed. A loss of connection may not be immediately apparent to others present. Certain committees or bodies may resolve matters through a general expression of consent rather than a roll call vote, meaning that some participants may lose the opportunity to express disagreement under these circumstances;
- Participants in meetings joining by remote means by video may seek to disable video to stabilise their connection or because they have been temporarily interrupted by events at their location - it may be unclear whether some participants are present or not. Relevant authorities will need to think about whether the requirement to be both seen and heard, for most meetings, allows for brief, temporary interruption like this;
- Where a participant is in the "waiting room" on an online platform. Here, participants will probably not be considered "present" as they cannot be seen and heard by others, cannot see and hear others (other than through a broadcast stream) and can play no active part in the meeting. The same may apply to participants who are only watching the broadcast feed as an observer.

This list is provided as an illustration; individual authorities will need to make the decisions on these points that are right for them, and which they are confident both meet the needs of the law and the needs and expectations of local people in how local democracy is transacted.

Relevant authorities may decide that an officer could check to ensure ongoing presence at a meeting by requiring members to confirm their presence in the meeting chat at the beginning of each substantive item, as we suggested in section 4.5. This could also provide a way to check presence in advance of a vote, as we suggest in section 4.10.

The withdrawal of members with a prejudicial interest

Where a participant has declared a prejudicial interest in an item they will be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the relevant item. The nature of an interest and whether or not it is prejudicial will be for an authority and its Monitoring Officer to decide.

For a physical meeting it is usual practice for a participant declaring such an interest to leave the room entirely while discussion is underway, as the mere act of ongoing presence of that individual could be seen as influencing the authority's action.

Where a participant is joining by remote means, and has declared a prejudicial interest, they should leave or be removed for the duration of consideration of that item. Other participants should however be aware that the participant will be able to observe the broadcast of the meeting while outside. Relevant authorities may seek to include in their policies and meeting arrangements a requirement that participants with prejudicial interests undertake not to observe a broadcast for the reasons set out above, although we note that there is no definitive way to police this requirement and it may be seen as overly restrictive.

Once the matter has been concluded the clerk or support officer to the committee should immediately notify the relevant participant so that they can re-join the meeting, and the meeting should not continue until they have re-joined (otherwise they should be marked as not present for any further items).

4.5   Support during meetings
Support and advice will usually need to be provided to the participants of multi-location meetings, usually relating to matters of procedure. Participants (especially the Chair of the meeting) will need to find an appropriate way to seek and obtain this advice to ensure the smooth running of the meeting.

Online platforms used by relevant authorities to convene multi-location meetings will usually have a chat function. The chat function will provide a useful way for advice to be shared and the business of the meeting to be managed, but its use can be open to misunderstanding.

Meeting policies should explain how this function will be used. Some relevant authorities may think it sensible to ban use of the chat function outright, either in all meetings or in some, specified, meetings.

Pros of chat functions

- Allows advice to be given by governance officers without disrupting the meeting;
- Allows the Chair to "cue up" and acknowledge requests by committee members to contribute without disrupting the flow of questioning;
- Allows members to generally express assent or agreement with another participant, or with a proposal to resolve a given issue, in a manner which gives the Chair confidence to proceed (although the fact that consent has been given in this way would need to be verbally acknowledged by the Chair in the interests of transparency);

- Allows the Chair or clerk to check whether a particular member is still "present", as we outline in section 4.10

<u>Cons of chat functions</u>

- Can be seen as undermining the transparency of the meeting;
- Can risk participants becoming distracted;
- Risk that participants use the chat for personal communication, and that this communication becomes inadvertently visible to other participants and to the public;
- Risk that chat will involve conversation about the matters under discussion without that discussion being visible to others, or recorded properly. Multi-location meetings policies may need to decide on the status of material recorded in the chat, and whether it can be used by the clerk to assist in the preparation of minutes;
- Risk that the chat becomes a place for general chit-chat or political needling.

The chat function will usually need to be limited to participants and the governance officer – but participants should treat conversations in chat as if they are happening in public.

Participants may decide to use WhatsApp or other messaging platforms to communicate over the course of the meeting. These platforms are not in the control of the authority; care should be taken in how they are used. For example, in the case of principal councils, if used within a political group, certain uses of WhatsApp could be seen as coming into conflict with the ban on the use of political management (whipping) at scrutiny committees.

<u>Officer support arrangements</u>

Different meetings will require different kinds of support from governance officers, and others. In the short term, as relevant authorities adopt to multi-location meetings (and, in particular, adapt to meetings where some may join through remote means and some physically) it may be necessary to think about the need for additional support. In due course, familiarity and confidence with new systems (and training and development for both officers and participants) will reduce this need.

Multi-location meeting policies will need to specify the kind, and level, of support necessary for specific meetings, and the circumstances where support can be provided by remote means and where officers might need to be physically present.

4.6   Supporting participants to be able to take an active part in the meeting

Meetings viewed live and available to view later maybe watched by a large audience and carefully scrutinised by the public including via social media. It is important that these meetings demonstrate good governance and high standards of conduct.

Meeting policies will need to take account of the need for good conduct and high standards of behaviour. These policies will need to be drafted to closely align with other constitutional provisions on these matters, such as the Code of Conduct.

Principles of good conduct apply to meetings of any kind. However, there will be some issues that are especially relevant for multi-location meetings.

The issues below are especially important:

- People being clear about their roles and the roles that others are playing, either as participants or observers. We cover more on this in the section below;

- Recognising that meeting remotely (and where some, but not all, participants are remote attendees) requires a different approach to the agenda and to behaviour than a meeting in person;
- The need to think carefully about – and plan for – how everyone involved in the meeting will be able to actively contribute;
- Having a clear focus on the actual outcome of the meeting.

Participants are likely to understand that formal meetings can often be "performative" – people in a formal meeting behave differently from the way that they would otherwise behave, even if there is no audience. People's physical presence in the same space has a significant impact on behaviour. Behaviour which might seem normal when everyone is in the council chamber – heckling, applause, the raising of points of order and so on – may feel odd and unusual when all or most people are joining through remote means. Participants in multi-location meetings during 2020 have talked about the "atmosphere" of multi-location meetings being different.

Behaviours in different types of meetings are likely to differ. Decision-making committees will look and feel different to audit or oversight committees, which will feel different from a principal council's planning and licensing committees. Understanding these differing behaviours will help to inform how multi-location meeting policies are developed, and how they connect to policies around conduct and standards.

This is not just about conduct and behaviour in the narrow sense of the word, but about a shift in mindset about how much work it is possible to do in a multi-location meeting, and how multi-location meetings might help us to plan and carry out work differently.

Research carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in 2020, and further evidence carried out in preparation for the production of this guidance, highlights the need for a shift in mindset associated with meetings where people join from multiple locations.

- It may be necessary to plan to do less. Meetings where some or all participants join through remote means can run as smoothly as in-person meetings but even after a year of all-remote operation, not everyone is equally familiar with and comfortable with what remains a new way of working. Planning work programmes accordingly will be important;
- Invest in preparation. Later in this guidance we highlight how Chairs may need to carry out planning to understand better what other participants might want to get out of a meeting. This is probably a good habit for all meetings, but will be especially relevant for multi-location ones;

Behaviour, and expectations, around meetings and how business is carried out in those meetings is crucially important in making those meetings effective. Participants in multi-location meetings and others involved in managing and supporting these meetings will have become adept at organising such meetings during the pandemic. The drafting of meeting arrangements and policies provides an opportunity to reflect on how an understanding of behavioural factors needs to be woven into these systems as they reach maturity.

Positive behaviours are also about confidence, which will come from participants being properly supported to play an active and productive role in the meetings in which they are due to take part. Relevant authorities will already have a sense of the support needs of meeting participants, but establishing permanent arrangements for multi-location meetings provides an opportunity to revisit those existing assumptions.

Some of the relevant issues are listed below. These are reproduced, in an amended form, from WLGA guidance issued in early 2020.

- Ensuring that participants have access to appropriate equipment. As a default a desktop PC or laptop with access to a stable broadband connection will be the best way to engage. Participants will need a camera (if they don't have a laptop with an integrated camera) and ideally should use headphones to avoid background noise. Relevant authorities should provide participants who are members of the authority with appropriate equipment if they do not have access to it;
- Ensuring that participants can troubleshoot basic technical problems before or during a meeting – ensuring that they know how to mute and unmute themselves, to activate and disable video, to check their internet connection and so on. There may also be a need to ensure that ICT staff or others are on hand to deal with more serious technical issues;
- Ensuring that participants know how to use the raise, and lower, hand feature, as well as etiquette around muting and unmuting when speaking – the "raise hand" feature may not be usable for those joining on mobile or on a tablet and alternatives may therefore need to be available;
- Use of the chat function, WhatsApp or other messaging platforms. This is covered in more detail in section 4.5;
- Ensuring that names displayed are consistent and accurate, with the role of the individual clearly identified: e.g. "Cllr John Williams – Committee Member" instead of "John's iPhone" or "jw10881";
- Ensuring that equipment being used has enough charge or is plugged into the mains;
- Ensuring that participants can view papers easily (we discussed the preparation and presentation of paperwork in more detail in section 4.3); this may include (for example) advice being given to participants on the window snapping function on a Windows device: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/snap-your-windows-885a9b1e-a983-a3b1-16cd-c531795e6241
- The need for participants to check the environment around them before joining a meeting – checking lighting (recognising the daytime lighting conditions may change over the course of a meeting), background (ensuring that backgrounds are relatively neutral and do not involve the inadvertent display of personal information – the council may provide a corporate background or participants may choose to blur their background) and any visual distractions or noise, with mobiles and onscreen notifications set to silent;
- The need to check personal appearance – formal attire is probably not required but members should probably wear the kind of clothing they would wear if physically present at a meeting;
- Arrangements for preparation – joining the meeting fifteen minutes before it is due to start and checking audio and video arrangements;
- Participants assuming that, for a meeting that is planned to be broadcast, the meeting is being recorded and broadcast for the total time they are on the call.

4.7 Supporting observers (including the public) to access and participate in the meeting

While the potential for bigger audiences provides new opportunities for participation, multi-location meetings must ensure arrangements are made for the public to participate via questions and presentations, for example. The presentation of multi-location meetings should also take into account public presence as an audience in new ways.

The broadcast of meetings will make them more accessible generally – but councils will still need to think of the needs of both observers and participants.

This may include:

- The physical layout of rooms, which will be affected by the requirements around visibility of those joining through remote means;
- How participants joining through remote means will be displayed on a screen or screens in a physical location.

<u>Ensuring that observers (including the public) feel welcome</u>

Councils have found over the course of 2020 that the universal use of multi-location meetings has resulted in a significant increase in the number of people viewing meetings.

Generally speaking meetings of relevant authorities will be meetings taking place in public rather than "public meetings". Members of the public will not have an automatic right to address committees or other bodies – although provision may be made in the constitution for them to do so, in which case observers can become participants.

There will be instances where those people who would otherwise be observers will need to join a meeting as an active participant. This may include:

- Those presenting petitions or deputations;
- Those asking public questions;
- People giving evidence (for example, to scrutiny committees);
- Applicants on regulatory matters (planning and licensing);
- Parties to quasi-judicial matters.

Where individuals are members of the public the Chair or an officer will need to make arrangements to ensure that they can join to participate – and that they are supported in doing so.

Meeting policies may need to make particular provision for this.

<u>Making sure that members of the public feel supported when participating through remote means</u>

At a physical meeting, an officer might have an opportunity to speak quietly to a person beforehand to allay any nerves, and to ensure that a person is satisfied with the experience after they have contributed. In a multi-location meeting these "soft" opportunities for conversation and reassurance may not naturally exist. Individuals may find themselves, joining from their own home, on a public call with fifty strangers, being expected to contribute coherently, and then removed from the call without ceremony when the item reaches its conclusion. Clearly, is not ideal. Relevant authorities may wish to explore how members of the public joining meetings in this way can be best supported.

<u>Formal meetings which are also public meetings</u>

It is common for some types of authorities to convene formal meetings which are designed to actively involve the public in proceedings.

These meetings might legally be formal meetings but they may have a different character and atmosphere. Relevant authorities should not avoid holding these kinds of meetings because they think that managing them as multi-location meetings will be complex. This also goes for meetings held in places in the community other than an authority's normal premises, where the presence of technology for broadcast and display may not be immediately present.

Meeting arrangements may make particular reference to and provision for these kinds of meetings.

Relevant authorities may also need to consider how opportunities for public protest and dissent might be provided for in multi-location meetings.

Protest can be inconvenient (and disruptive), but it also reflects a vital public right. Where relevant authorities propose to carry out business by way of multi-location meetings as the norm, and particularly where little to no business for certain bodies may be carried out in person, this feature of the local democratic landscape could be at risk; meeting arrangements should take account of this factor. It will not be appropriate for an authority to decide that it will convene a meeting entirely remotely (with no business being carried out in person) if the principal reason for doing so is because it will eliminate the risk of embarrassment to the authority of a visible, public protest in the vicinity of the meeting.

It is, however, proper for a council to decide that it will convene all meetings so that they can only be accessed through remote means, as long as the accessibility and equality implications of this decision are understood, and as long as the discretion of the authority to make exceptions to these arrangements in particular cases is not fettered.

We noted in section 4.1 the need to make physical arrangements for certain meetings, even those where most participants may be joining through remote means. This may also provide the opportunity for public protest, which could take place in a public gallery, and made visible to those participating through remote means.

This would allow for a protest to be streamed into a meeting otherwise taking place in multiple locations, and could ensure that people protesting in this way feel that their voice has been heard.

4.8   Supporting broadcast by members of the public
Members of the public or the press may wish to film for immediate or future broadcast some or all of a meeting.

In the case of multi-location meetings where most or all participants are in the same location, this may involve the separate recording of a broadcast stream for editing and broadcast later.

For meetings where some or all participants attend physically – with physical arrangements made for observers - members of the public and members of the press may wish to use their own equipment for recording and broadcast.

Relevant authorities may wish to engage with the local press, and to invite views from the public, as to how their meeting arrangements and policies should take account of the requirement to provide access for this purpose. The way that this works is likely to be different from how councils may have supported this activity when meetings were "all-physical". This may involve:

- Ensuring that the layout of a room is designed to support video recording (by providing a space from which people might film proceedings without visual obstruction, for example);
- Ensuring that amplification arrangements in a committee room allow proceedings to be adequately recorded by an external microphone, or providing a way for members of the public carrying out recording to take the broadcast audio feed, where relevant;
- Arrangements for shots of the room which include members of the public and others in the audience. Committee meetings occur in public and those attending do not have an automatic expectation of privacy or the right to object to recording, but there may be circumstances in which councils want to think about how they will ensure that those carrying out recording are focusing on the formal proceedings;

- Arrangements for video and audio recording of the recorder's own narrative and of two-way interviews with participants within the committee room; members of the press in particular may want to film interviews, pieces to camera and establishing shots of the space in which the meeting takes place, and arrangements should be in place to support this before and after the meeting, and to ensure that those attending are aware that this may be happening.

This is not an exhaustive list.

4.9   Chairing meetings

Chairing a multi-location meeting is very different to chairing a face-to-face meeting. Chairs will need to be supported to carry out their role in specific ways. The job of the Chair will be a particular challenge where a meeting is being carried out in a physical space with only some participants joining through remote means.

The following general principles for chairing meetings in this context are reproduced and amended, from WLGA guidance issued in spring 2020, and incorporate guidance produced by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny for both English and Welsh councils at the same time.

Chairs have a particular responsibility to prepare for the meeting, probably in a more planned and directed way than might be necessary for a physical meeting. This may involve the Chair consulting with officers, and other committee members, to determine:

- What the meeting is about, and the possible purpose and outcomes for every item on that meeting's agenda;
- What information and paperwork will need to be made available in order for these outcomes to be delivered;
- Where councillors or other meeting participants will want to contribute – and where and how public participation might need to be facilitated;
- Where these people might need particular support in order to participate in the way that they want.

Chairs will also need to engage with all participants (which may include external witnesses and members of the public or others with a role to play) to ensure that their role and means of involvement are well understood. This is covered in more detail in section 4.7.

Chairs should:

- Think about the accessibility of the meeting to the public, and whether there are any things they can that will ensure that public observers are welcomed and that business is explained in a way that is understandable, including the operation of the multi-location meeting itself;
- Ensure that they are prepared for the meeting in a logistical sense by being aware of which members and other participants may be joining by remote means. If the Chair themselves is joining by remote means while some other participants are present in a committee room particular steps will need to be taken to prepare, which are set out in section 4.1;
- Ensure before the start of the meeting that everyone is able to access the meeting , and that everyone is able to both see and hear each other (where the law requires it for specific meetings) or hear each other (for other formal meetings);
- Provide a reminder of meeting arrangements and policies, particularly relating to conduct and behaviour, including some of the material set out in section 4.6 above. This may (depending on the meeting) involve advice on voting arrangements;

- At the beginning of the meeting, introduce themselves, the committee, officers present and other participants to ensure that those watching or listening to a broadcast are aware who is who;
- To 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 (as we explore further in section 4.6)
- Check occasionally through the meeting that no one has been 'lost' due to technical issues, and provide support to councillors experiencing challenges – in this Chairs may need the support of support officers
- Pay more attention than usual to framing the meeting with reminders of the purpose of each agenda item and summarising decisions and actions for each item and again at the end of the meeting.
- Check at the end of each agenda item that all members are content that they have been able to contribute, and ensure that agreed voting arrangements are followed where relevant.

The "balance" between individuals in a room, and those joining by remote means, will have a significant effect on how business will be transacted. This links back to the points we made in the earlier section on conduct and behaviour. Chairs and their support officers are likely to need to know ahead of time which members to attend physically and which may join by remote means. For meetings with a mix of arrangements – particularly if the Chair themselves will be joining by remote means – planning is likely to be necessary. This may include:

- Understanding the motivations and objectives of individual participants on specific agendas items, and having a sense of what they may want to say and ask;
- Identifying how a support officer or other member may bring their attention to a member wishing to make a comment through remote means or in the committee room (it will otherwise be challenging for a Chair to maintain awareness of those in the room as well as those joining remotely);
- Planning debate to be themed or otherwise structured rather than inviting comments generally, to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute;
- Briefing witnesses on expectations;
- Ensuring that reports reflect the above sets of circumstances.

This kind of planning will benefit any meeting, not just those with a mix of in-person and remote attendance.

4.10 The taking of votes

Multi-location meetings provide additional challenges in terms of capturing votes. Chosen options will depend on the chosen platform and local preferences.

Participants in a formal meeting may decide to do something through general consent, or through a recorded vote. Immediately before the vote the Chair will need to determine that all members of the body continue to be "present", as we set out in section 4.4.

There are a number of different options when it comes to recording votes:

- A verbal roll call of those participants entitled to vote ("voters"). Particularly for full Councils, this process has been found to be the most rigorous but can be very time consuming, especially if amendments to motions are put to the vote;
- Using the 'raise hand' function, although this is subject to misinterpretation and human error;
- Responses via the chat;
- Dedicated voting software incorporated into the platform.

The authority will want to ensure that:

- All voters have the same opportunity to vote;
- All voters vote through the same process. In some council chambers, facilities for the taking and recording of votes may be present, but those joining through remote means may not be able to participate in the use of this in-situ technology. Relevant authorities with this technology will need to think carefully about whether, and how, such facilities might extend into the remote space, or how systems used for remote voting might extend into the physical space;
- A suitable record of the vote is captured by the appropriate officer and is confirmed in a way that is understandable to those observing the meeting.

<u>Bodies reaching resolutions without a vote</u>

It is common that committees or other bodies may resolve to take certain action without a vote being recorded. In person, the Chair is able to get a sense of whether consensus exists by looking around the room. Those present have the opportunity to object and to press for a vote, depending on the authority's standing orders.

Where participants are joining through remote means (and particularly where some members join through remote means and some are present physically) the Chair will need to special care to ensure that consent is present to move on without a vote.

4.11 Training, peer support and good practice sharing
The arrangements for multi-location meetings are new and will continue to evolve. This makes it particularly important to ensure that councillors and officer have access to good quality training, peer support and good practice sharing.

Those participating in multi-location meetings and those expecting to participate should be offered initial, and top-up, training, development and support to ensure an understanding of these issues. This is not the same as training to support the technical use of ICT equipment.

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Special Democratic Services Committee – 27 September 2021

Democratic Services Committee Annual Reports 2019-2020 & 2020-2021

Purpose:	To provide the Democratic Services Committee with the Annual Reports 2019-2020 & 2020-2021 for the period 9 May 2019 to 30 September 2020 and 1 October 2020 – 19 May 2021. The reports outline the work of the Committee during those periods.
Report Authors:	Huw Evans & Allison Lowe
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar
For Information	

1. Introduction

1.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required each Principal Council to establish a Democratic Services Committee. The Annual Meeting of Council held on 24 May 2012 originally established the Democratic Services Committee.

1.2 Councillor P M Black was originally elected Chair of the Democratic Services Committee at the Annual Meeting of Council on 19 May 2016 and re-elected annually until Councillor L James was elected Chair on 2 July 2020.

1.3 The Democratic Services Committee is serviced by the Head of Democratic Services, Huw Evans.

1.4 The Democratic Services Annual Reports are attached at:
Appendix A – Democratic Services Annual Report 2019-2020 and
Appendix B – Democratic Services Annual Report 2020-2021.

2.   Format of Annual Report

2.1   Councillors are asked to comment on the style and format of the Annual Report informally to the Head of Democratic Services, as he is keen to ensure that it continues to be an informative, easy to read report.

3.   Integrated Assessment Implications

3.1   The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.2   The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

3.3   Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

3.4   There are no integrated assessment implications associated with this report.

4.   Financial Implications

4.1   There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5.   Legal Implications

5.1   There are no legal implications other than those set out in the body of the reports.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:
Appendix A - Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2019-2020
(9 May 2019 to 30 September 2020)
Appendix B – Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2020-2021 (1 October 2020 – 19 May 2021)

Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2019-2020

City & County of Swansea

Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2019-2020
(9 May 2019 to 30 September 2020)

1.   Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

1.1   During 2019-2020, the Democratic Services Committee focussed its work on providing advice and guidance to Councillors on the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales via their Annual Report for 2020-2021 including the importance of Councillors utilising the Reimbursement of Costs of Care to assist them to carry out their role as a Councillor.

1.2   Frequency of meetings for the 2019-2020 Municipal Year were severely affected due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.3   Whilst the Democratic Services Committee did not meet as frequently as anticipated, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Committee for their time, dedication and support during this difficult period.

1.4   A number of officers have helped considerably with the work of the Committee. In particular, I would like to thank Huw Evans, Head of Democratic Services, Allison Lowe, Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Team for their support and professionalism.

Councillor P M Black
Chair of Democratic Services Committee

2. Membership of the Democratic Services Committee

2.1 The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 9 May 2019 to 30 September 2020:

Councillor Peter Black – **Chair** (Until 4 June 2020)*

Councillor June Burtonshaw

Councillor Nick Davies

Councillor Mike Durke

Councillor Louise Gibbard

Councillor Joe Hale

Councillor Lynda James (from 4 June 2020 & **Chair** from 2.7.2020)**

Councillor Susan Jones

Councillor Erika Kirchner

Councillor Wendy Lewis **Vice Chair**

Councillor Brigitte Rowlands

Councillor Gloria Tanner

Councillor Linda Tyler-Lloyd

Councillor Lesley Walton

2.2 It should be noted that on 4 June 2020 Councillor Peter Black* ceased to be a member of the Democratic Services Committee and was replaced by Councillor Lynda James**.

2.3 Councillor Lynda James** was elected Chair of the Democratic Services Committee at Council on 2 July 2020, however the Committee did not meet between July and the end of the Municipal Year (30 September 2020).

3. Dates of the Democratic Services Committee Meetings

3.1 The Democratic Services Committee met on these dates during 2019-2020:

16 July 2019	6 November 2019

3.2 Two meetings scheduled for 21 April 2020 and 13 July 2020 did not take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Democratic Services Committee - Terms of Reference

4.1 The remit of the Democratic Services Committee is set out in **Section 11 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011** and is to:

4.2 Exercise the function of the local authority under section 8(1) (a) Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (designation of Head of Democratic Services).

4.3 Review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge Democratic Services functions, including:

a) Achievement of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Member Support and Development Charter;
b) Councillor Training;
c) Improvements and innovations such as electronic voting, web casting etc.

4.4 Make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision.

4.5 It is for a Democratic Services Committee to determine how to exercise those functions.

4.6 To determine whether or not the Councillors period of family absence should be cancelled in accordance with Regulation 34 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

4.7 To determine whether or not to withhold a Councillor's Remuneration should they fail to return following a period of family absence on the date specified in the notice provided.

5. Activities of the Democratic Services Committee

5.1 During the municipal year 2019-2020 the work of the Democratic Services Committee was greatly reduced due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Municipal Year was also extended until September 2020. However in that time the Committee did consider:

5.2 Democratic Services Annual Report 2018-2019.

5.2.1 The Head of Democratic Services presented the Democratic Services Annual Report 2018-2019 which outlined the work of the Committee during that period.

5.3 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) - Draft Annual Report 2020-2021 - Consultation

5.3.1 The Committee considered the draft Annual Report published by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and provided a draft response, which was considered by Council prior to submission to the IRPW.

5.3.2 In addition, The Committee agreed that the reimbursement of costs of care could assist those Councillors and Co-opted Members with caring responsibilities, which in turn might help to increase diversity in democracy by encouraging people to stand as candidates as the caring responsibility barrier was removed.

6. Member Development

6.1 The following training / briefings were provided in 2019-2020, however opportunities were significantly reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic:

11 June 2019	National Approach to Statutory Advocacy – Implementation
18 June 2019	Ash Dieback presentation
13 August 2019	Financial Management & Accounting (for Audit Committee Members)
8 October 2019	Review of Audit Committee Effectiveness (for Audit Committee Members)
10 December 2019	Risk Management Training (for Audit Committee Members)
17 March 2020	Covid-19 briefing / training

6.2 All Councillors were provided with 1-2-1 training by the Digital Change Co-ordinator in the use of the "Microsoft Teams" platform in order to enable Committee meetings to be held remotely.

6.3 In addition, all Councillors are encouraged to complete various e-learning training, including mandatory Safeguarding training via the Learning Pool platform.

7. Democratic Services Team 9 May 2019 – 30 September 2020

7.1 The Team Structure for Democratic Services and Scrutiny for the period 2019-2020 are set out below. The Posts are all 1 Full Time Equivalent (fte) unless otherwise stated.

7.2 Democratic Services Team

Job Title	Officer Name
Head of Democratic Services	Huw Evans
Democratic Services Officer **(0.5 fte)**	Samantha Woon
Democratic Services Officer **(0.5 fte)**	Kate Jones
Democratic Services Officer	Gareth Borsden
Democratic Services Officer	Jeremy Parkhouse
Democratic Services Officer	Allison Lowe
Democratic Services Support Officer	Caroline Davies
Democratic Services Administrative Assistant	Karen Thomas
Democratic Services Support Assistant	Diane Clatworthy

7.2.1 The Democratic Services Team supports Full Council and all of its Committees and the formal decision-making and good governance of the Council. This includes the preparation and publication of agendas, minutes & report packs using the Modern.Gov committee administration system and booking rooms for meetings and pre-meetings. Support is provided to the following meetings.

- Council, Cabinet & External Funding Panel

- Regulatory: Planning, General and Statutory Licensing Committees including Sub Committees;

- Governance: Appeals & Awards Committee, Appointments Committee, Audit Committee, Chief Executive's Remuneration & Appraisal Committee, Constitution Working Group, Corporate Parenting Board, Democratic Services Committee, Pension Fund Committee, Standards Committee;

- Joint Committees: Local Pension Board, Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee, Swansea Public Services Board Joint Committee;

- Other: Armed Forces Covenant Signatories Panel, Community / Town Councils Forum, Corporate Briefing, Development Advisory Group, Gower Area Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Steering Group, Joint Consultative Committee, Sustainable Development Fund Panel and Trustees Panel.

7.2.2 The Democratic Services Team arrange suitable dates, prepare agendas, co-ordinate report approval, circulate documents, draft minutes, record decisions and attendances and publish appropriate information on the various websites.

7.2.3 The team also co-ordinates the delivery of the audio visual and webcasting facilities for Cabinet, Council, Planning, Audit, Scrutiny Programme Committee and Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee.

7.2.4 Since March 2020 the team have developed the use of remote meetings and successfully delivered a remote meeting capability, including the live streaming of many meetings. This brings additional administrative and preparatory work including placing a recording on our website once each meeting has concluded.

7.2.5 From July 2020 the live streaming of meetings expanded to include: Pension Fund Committee, 5 x Policy Development Committees, Statutory Licensing Sub Committee, Swansea Public Services Board Joint Committee and Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Steering Group.

8. General Information

8.1 The Democratic Services Committee is keen to see members of the public attending its Meetings. With the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All of the public papers are published online www.swansea.gov.uk/democracy

8.2 Further information can be provided by Democratic Services: Democratic.Services@swansea.gov.uk or on 01792 636923

Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2020-2021

City & County of Swansea

Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2020-2021
(1 October 2020 to 19 May 2021)

1.   Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

1.1   During 2020-2021, the Democratic Services Committee provided advice and guidance to Councillors on the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales via their Annual Report for 2021-2022.

1.2   Frequency of meetings for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year were again severely affected due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.3   Whilst the Democratic Services Committee did not meet as frequently as anticipated, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the former Chair, Councillor Peter Black and the whole Committee for their time, dedication and support during this difficult period.

1.4   A number of officers have helped considerably with the work of the Committee. In particular, I would like to thank Huw Evans, Head of Democratic Services, Allison Lowe, Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Team for their support and professionalism.

Councillor L James
Chair of Democratic Services Committee

2. Membership of the Democratic Services Committee

2.1 The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 1 October 2020 to 19 May 2021:

Councillor Lynda James
Chair

Councillor June Burtonshaw

Councillor Nick Davies

Councillor Mike Durke

Councillor Louise Gibbard

Councillor Joe Hale

Councillor Susan Jones

Councillor Erika Kirchner

Councillor Wendy Lewis
Vice Chair

Councillor Brigitte Rowlands

Councillor Gloria Tanner

Councillor Linda Tyler-Lloyd

Councillor Lesley Walton

2.2   Councillor Lynda James** was elected Chair of the Democratic Services Committee at Council on 2 July 2020 and re-elected Chair at the Annual Meeting of Council on 1 October 2020.

2.3   The Democratic Services Committee did not meet between 2 July and 1 October 2020.

3.   Dates of the Democratic Services Committee Meetings

3.1   The Democratic Services Committee met remotely via Microsoft Teams on the following date in 2020-2021:

14 October 2021	

3.2   Two meetings scheduled for 9 November 2020 and 1 March 2021 did not take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.   Democratic Services Committee - Terms of Reference

4.1   The remit of the Democratic Services Committee is set out in **Section 11 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011** and is to:

4.2   Exercise the function of the local authority under section 8(1) (a) Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (designation of Head of Democratic Services).

4.3   Review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge Democratic Services functions, including:

a)   Achievement of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Member Support and Development Charter;
b)   Councillor Training;
c)   Improvements and innovations such as electronic voting, web casting etc.

4.4   Make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision.

4.5   It is for a Democratic Services Committee to determine how to exercise those functions.

4.6   To determine whether or not the Councillors period of family absence should be cancelled in accordance with Regulation 34 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

4.7   To determine whether or not to withhold a Councillor's Remuneration should they fail to return following a period of family absence on the date specified in the notice provided.

5. Activities of the Democratic Services Committee

5.1 During the municipal year 2020-2021 the work of the Democratic Services Committee was once again affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. However the Committee did consider:

5.2 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) - Draft Annual Report 2021-2022 - Consultation

5.2.1 The Committee considered the draft Annual Report published by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and provided a draft response, which was considered by Council prior to submission to the IRPW.

6. Member Development

6.1 The following member training was provided in 2020-2021, however opportunities were significantly reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic:

Various dates in January 2021	E-voting training by the Head of Democratic Services
24 & 25 February 2021	Members Webinar on the ONS Census
29 & 30 March 2021	Member Briefing on Socio-Economic Duty by the Equality & Human Rights Commission

6.2 All Members are encouraged to complete various e-learning training, including mandatory Safeguarding training via the Learning Pool platform.

7. Democratic Services Team 1 October 2020 – 19 May 2021

7.1 The Team Structure for Democratic Services and Scrutiny for the period 2020-2021 are set out below. The Posts are all 1 Full Time Equivalent (fte) unless otherwise stated.

7.2 Democratic Services Team

Job Title	Officer Name
Head of Democratic Services	Huw Evans
Democratic Services Officer **(0.5 fte)**	Samantha Woon
Democratic Services Officer **(0.5 fte)**	Kate Jones
Democratic Services Officer	Gareth Borsden
Democratic Services Officer	Jeremy Parkhouse
Democratic Services Officer	Allison Lowe
Democratic Services Support Officer	Caroline Davies
Democratic Services Administrative Assistant	Karen Thomas
Democratic Services Support Assistant	Diane Clatworthy

7.2.1 The Democratic Services Team supports Full Council and all its Committees and the formal decision-making and good governance of the Council. This includes the preparation and publication of agendas, minutes & reports packs using the Modern.Gov committee administration system and booking rooms for meetings and pre-meetings. Support is provided to the following meetings.

- Council and Cabinet

- Regulatory: Planning, General and Statutory Licensing Committees including Sub Committees;

- Governance: Appeals & Awards Committee, Appointments Committee, Audit Committee, Chief Executive's Remuneration & Appraisal Committee, Constitution Working Group, Corporate Parenting Board, Democratic Services Committee, Pension Fund Committee, Standards Committee;

- Joint Committees: Local Pension Board, Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee, Swansea Public Services Board Joint Committee;

- Other: Armed Forces Covenant Signatories Panel, Community / Town Councils Forum, Corporate Briefing, Development Advisory Group, Gower Area Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Steering Group, Joint Consultative Committee, Sustainable Development Fund Panel and Trustees Panel.

7.2.2 The Democratic Services Team arrange suitable dates, prepare agendas, co-ordinate report approval, circulate documents, draft minutes, record decisions and attendances and publish appropriate information on the various websites.

7.2.3 The team also co-ordinates the delivery of the audio visual and webcasting facilities for Cabinet, Council, Audit Committee, Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Steering Group, Planning Committee, Pension Fund Committee, 5 x Policy Development Committees, Scrutiny Programme Committee, Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee, Swansea Public Services Board Joint Committee.

7.2.4 All of the above meetings are streamed live and a recording placed on the Council's website once each meeting has concluded.

8. General Information

8.1 The Democratic Services Committee is keen to see members of the public attending its Meetings. With the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All of the public papers are published online www.swansea.gov.uk/democracy

8.2 Further information can be provided by Democratic Services: Democratic.Services@swansea.gov.uk or on 01792 636923

Report of the Chair

Special Democratic Services Committee – 27 September 2021

Work Plan 2021-2022

Date	Item
27 September 2021 (Special)	- Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022 - Results of the Questionnaire on Remote Meetings - Hybrid / Multi-Location Meeting Policy - Democratic Services Committee Annual Reports 2019-2020 & 2020-2021
8 November 2021	- Councillor ICT Allowances Policy - Councillor Expenses / Costs of Care - Feedback from Councillor Champion
Additional meeting December?	
31 January 2022	- Diversity in Democracy - Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022 - E-learning - Feedback from Councillor Champion
Additional meeting February?	
21 March 2022	- Councillor Handbook - Feedback from Councillor Champion