

To: Standards Committee
Date: 17 March 2026
Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)
Title of Report: Consultation Results and Government Response to Remote Meetings and Proxy Voting

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To note the Government's response to the consultation for Remote Meetings and Proxy Voting for Local Government Committees.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	N/A
Corporate Priority:	N/A
Policy Framework:	N/A

Recommendation(s): That the Standards Committee resolves to:
1. Note the Government's response to the consultation for Remote Meetings and Proxy Voting for Local Government Committees.

Information Exempt from Publication
N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Government Response to Consultation on Remote Meetings and Proxy Voting – 5 June 2025	No

Introduction and background

1. Following the discussion at the previous Standards Committee in November 2025, where Members asked about the provision of remote attendance at Committee meetings, Committee and Member Services have reviewed the latest from Government with this provision to allow remote attendance.
2. As per the Local Government Act 1972, all Committee meetings are required to be in a physical location and for all Committee Members to be present within the room.
3. During the Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020, the Government passed emergency legislation, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allowing all Committee meetings to be held virtually. This temporary legislation expired on 6 May 2021, forcing all local authorities to return to in-person Committees.
4. Equipment for hybrid meetings have been installed in committee rooms at local authorities across the Country to enable livestreaming and for some remote attendance, but attending remotely is only permitted for non-committee Members and Officers, as these are not bound by the legislation.

Remote and Hybrid Meetings from 2019 to 2024

5. There has been extensive lobbying from local authorities across the country alongside the support organisations which represent Local Government at a national level. Their responses to the requests from their member organisations are documented below and within the background documents.
6. The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) had previously called upon the Government to review remote attendance for committee meetings back in 2019, after the Government had indicated they would be reviewing remote attendance initially for Combined Authorities or Joint Committees.
7. The District Councils Network (DCN) responded to a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) consultation for evidence on the continuation of remote meetings in June 2021, noting should be for local authorities to decide what works best for their decision-making processes and ensuring councils to meet openness & transparency and access to information requirements, they should be allowed to proceed in the most suitable way and the opportunity to develop hybrid sessions, mixing remote and in person accessibility to best support local democracy.
8. The Local Government Association (LGA) circulated a survey in October 2021, a few months after the legislation had elapsed, to all local authorities to assess the impact of the return to in-person meetings, with the results below:
9. 72% thought that councillor attendance was lower since returning to in-person meetings.
10. 73% thought that attendance by members of the public is lower since returning to in-person council meetings.
11. 53% thought that engagement by members of the public with council meetings is lower since returning to in-person meetings.

12. 84% thought that the costs associated with statutory council meetings had increased.
13. 81% said that they had not had any meetings that were cancelled or not quorate due to councillors being unable to attend.
14. 77% were concerned about running statutory council meetings exclusively in person in the long-term.
15. The County Council Network (CCN) responded to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) survey as part of their 'Make a Change' campaign in May 2022, with the results indicating:
16. 92% of councillors under the age of 44 and 61% of those aged 65 and over said that adopting a hybrid model would help improve the diversity of councils. 85% of female councillors said such a model would enable a better councillor-life balance. Just 11% of respondents to the survey were under the age of 44.
17. 51% said adopting a hybrid model which enables local people to watch all meetings online would make their council more accessible and accountable to their residents. 69% of respondents said video conferencing had helped them engage with community groups during the pandemic.
18. 70% said a hybrid model would cut down on travel expenses for their local authority, and 76% said it would cut down on their carbon footprint. One councillor in a rural county estimated such a model could cut down on 1,000 miles for them a year.

Remote and Hybrid Meetings since 2024

19. The Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) have continued to campaign the Government to create the provision for remote meetings since the end of the temporary legislation.
20. On 24 October 2024, the government published a consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings and invited all local authorities to complete the consultation. The consultation closed on 19 December 2024. The consultation sought views on the practical implications of allowing remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings.
21. The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) submitted a public response to the consultation, noting that the remote attendance would enable participation from those with caring responsibilities, support councillors managing illness or disability, increase diversity in local democracy and enhance accessibility to local decision-making.
22. On 5 June 2025, the Government issued its response in which it stated that they "plan to collaboratively develop guidance with the sector on both policies, to ensure that local authority schemes are supportive of members and officers."

Next Steps

23. It is expected the Government will include the relevant powers for remote and hybrid council meetings in the forthcoming English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. This would form part of the sector-wide re-alignment as part of Local Government Reorganisation.

24. The government is anticipated to take the bill through the legislative process in 2026, having been introduced in July 2025.
25. As per the ministerial statement as part of the consultation response, as set out in Appendix 1, it is expected that when the legislation is implemented, local authorities will be expected to set their own remote and hybrid attendance policies, which could include the minimum requirements for in-person attendance and which committees could be held entirely remotely.

Alternative Options Considered

26. There are no alternative recommendations, the Committee are asked to note the Government's response on remote meetings and proxy voting.
27. Councillors should be informed and up to date about potential changes to the constitution of governance meetings.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

28. It is widely expected that any changes or superseding of the Local Government Act 1972 will coincide with Local Government Reorganisation and any associated legislation. Any decisions relating to quorum of in-person attendees compared to virtual attendees and the process for proxy voting would be matter for the new Unitary Authority.

Financial implications

29. There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any future decision to include remote or hybrid committee meetings would be subject to financial review as part of a wider review of implementation the Government's requests.

Legal issues

30. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Any future decision to include remote or hybrid committee meetings would be subject to legal review as part of a wider review of implementation the Government's requests.

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Background Papers:

- 1 [Remote attendance and proxy voting in local authorities: consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)
- 2 [DCN responds to MHCLG call for evidence on the continuation of remote meetings | District Councils' Network](#)
- 3 [Impact of in-person council meetings survey: October - November 2021 | Local Government Association](#)
- 4 [New County Councils Network and Zoom report backs NALC call for remote meeting powers](#)
- 5 [NALC secures major victory as the government backs remote council meetings](#)
- 6 [ADSO joins call for remote and hybrid council meetings to be prioritised in new legislation - ADSO](#)
- 7 [LGA on remote attendance announcement | Local Government Association](#)
- 8 [SLCC | Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings](#)

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