

# CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

**Report to:** Council

**Date of meeting:** 26 October 2023

**Title:** Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings

**Purpose of the report:** For Council to consider and approve the protocol

**For:** Decision

**Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:**

**Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation**

**Introduction**

This draft protocol has been created, in line with the Local Government & Elections (Wales) 2021 Act and Welsh Government's the Draft Statutory and Non Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales and is a reflection of the practice currently carried out by Ceredigion County Council. This is outlined in paragraphs 15.48 to 15.51 of the guidance:

- 15.48 *The 2021 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.*
- 15.49 *Although, there is a requirement for principal councils to broadcast certain meetings which was commenced in May 2022, many principal councils were already broadcasting a number of their meetings, we therefore suggest 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.*
- 15.50 *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.*
- 15.51 *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.*

This protocol supersedes the prior protocol for remote attendance at meetings, which was developed in response to the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

Underpinning this Protocol are the fundamental principles that conduct shall be compliant with the Code of Conduct for Members and that the integrity and security of any confidential information is maintained.

### **Development of the draft protocol**

This protocol has been developed with the support of, and input by the Democratic Services Committee. During its meeting dated 9 June 2023, the Democratic Services Committee recommended that Council approve the Draft Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-locations meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings. The Committee also recommended that training is provided to all Members in relation to the protocol.

The draft protocol was shared with Members of the Constitution Working Group during its meeting dated 26 September 2023. The Constitution Working Group recommended the removal of the requirement to notify Democratic Services 2 weeks in advance of overseas travel as they felt that 2 weeks was too long, and that they may need to travel at short notice. The reference to 2 weeks has now been removed from the draft protocol.

### **Amendments to the prior protocol**

In addition to amendments referencing the revised legislation and Welsh Government Statutory and non-statutory guidance the main amendments compared to the previous protocol include:

- a) Addition of section 1: **Deciding which meetings will have physical provision made for them and which will be conducted wholly through remote means;**
- b) Addition of section 2: **Meeting Platform**
- c) Section 6: **Invitation to join the meeting remotely** – clarification of procedure for Councillors / Members of the public
- d) Addition of Section 9: **Electronic broadcasts of meetings**
- e) Addition of section 13: **Attendance at Meetings whilst out of Country**
- f) Section 14: **Chairing of Meetings** - amended replacing current table
- g) Section 15: **Voting** – clarification in final paragraph of procedure where a Member is unable to provide a vote on the initial attempt
- h) Section 16: **Using the chat function in the software system** – separate heading included for clarity
- i) Addition of Section 17: **Record of Attendance**
- j) Amendment to Section 18: **Declaration of interest** – to clarify the need to stipulate whether the declaration is ‘personal’ or ‘personal and prejudicial’ to remove reference to ‘chat’ function, and to clarify procedure for late notification of interest
- k) Addition of Section 22: **Etiquette at Remote / Hybrid Meetings**
- l) Addition of Section 23: **Revising or replacing arrangements in relation to Attendance and Electronic Broadcasting of meetings**

- m) Addition of Section 24: **Arrangements relating to Joint Committees**
- n) Removal of section 1.4: **Joining by telephone**

### **Next Steps**

Subject to the approval of the draft protocol by Council, the protocol will be included in the Council's Constitution, replacing the prior protocol.

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations:**

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why.**

No, this is not a policy, or strategy change. The purpose of this document is to set out the current practice in relation to attendance and broadcasting of meetings, as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

### **Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:**

**Long term:** N/A  
**Collaboration:** N/A  
**Involvement:** N/A  
**Prevention:** N/A  
**Integration:** N/A

### **Recommendation(s):**

**For Council to:**

- a) approve the Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings
- b) note that this protocol supersedes the previous protocol.

### **Reasons for decision:**

To ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

**Overview and Scrutiny:** N/A

**Policy Framework:** N/A

**Corporate Well-being Objectives:** N/A

**Finance and Procurement implications:** N/A

### **Legal Implications:**

Failure to comply with requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

**Staffing implications:** N/A

**Property / asset implications:** N/A

**Risk(s):** N/A

### **Statutory Powers:**

Welsh Government Statutory and Non Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales;  
The Local Government Act 2000;

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011;  
The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Appendices:**

Appendix A: Protocols for Attendance at Local authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings

**Corporate Lead Officer:**

Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services

**Reporting Officer:**

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services

**Date:**

01/10/2023