

Remote meetings consultation

Non-confidential

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Report to: Parish Council 11/2024

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, announced at the Local Government Association's (LGA) 2024 Conference in Harrogate on Thursday 24 October, that the government will seek views on allowing councils to determine their own approach to virtual meetings and proxy voting. It is also considering changes to the standards regime include removing the requirement for councillors' home addresses to be published and introducing sanctions.

A consultation paper has been published with a closing date of 19 December.

Both NALC and SLCC are encouraging councils, councillors and clerks to respond to this consultation - your responses are vital in demonstrating the strong support for this flexibility, building on the momentum from the previous call for evidence.

NALC and SLCC will also be responding to the consultation and share the view that remote meeting options are essential for:

- Enabling participation from those with caring responsibilities
- Supporting councillors managing illness or disability
- Increasing diversity in local democracy
- Enhancing accessibility to local decision-making

Should this get passed in law, and council have an option to implement this, it is likely that hybrid meetings would be required. There would be implications in terms of further IT requirements, such as camera, microphones, other technology, which would need to be budgeted for.

The consultation on proxy voting was unexpected and was not something that NALC/SLCC have been pushing for. There are ongoing discussions on whether proxy voting would be legal for parish and town councils, due to predetermination. We are awaiting further guidance from NALC/SLCC on this.

Recommendation

- That council makes a considered response to the remote meetings consultation.