

SUBJECT:	CONSULTATION OUTCOME: REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES: CONSULTATION RESULTS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** This report presents the consultation outcome on *Remote attendance and proxy voting in local authorities: consultation results and government response*, which was published on 5 June 2025 and attached at Appendix A to this report.

2. Background

- 2.1** Following time-limited Covid remote attendance permissions that expired in 2021, local authority committee meetings have been required to be held in a single, specified, physical place.
- 2.2** On 24 October 2024, the Government published a consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings. The consultation closed on 19 December 2024 and received 5,844 responses. The consultation sought views on the practical implications of allowing remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings. A working group of the Ethics and Engagement Committee met and submitted a response to the consultation.

3. The Government's conclusion and next steps

- 3.1** The Government has concluded that in-person authority meetings remain vital for local democracy, but that hybrid and remote attendance, and proxy voting, will enable local authorities in England to develop more modern, accessible and flexible working practices. The Government therefore plans to legislate to support permanent provision in relation to both policies, when parliamentary time allows.
- 3.2** On remote attendance, the Government plans to permit local authorities to develop their own locally appropriate policies, if they decide to allow councillors to attend committee meetings remotely.
- 3.3** On proxy voting, the Government plans to require principal (unitary, upper and second-tier) councils to implement proxy voting schemes, to provide consistency for members who are absent when they become a new parent, or for serious or long-term illness. This requirement will apply to meetings of full Council.

- 3.4** For all other meetings, proxy voting may be used but will not be required, and substitute or pairing schemes may be more appropriate. The Government also plans for other local authorities not listed above to be enabled, but not required, to implement proxy voting schemes, for any of their meetings, in the context of member absences for serious or long-term illness or becoming a new parent.
- 3.5** The Committee is invited to note the conclusion and proposed next steps of the consultation results and government response and await further information to be released after this has been legislated by the Government. The Committee will receive further reports once these proposals have been legislated.

4. Organisational Impacts

4.1 Finance

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 Legal Implications, including Procurement Rules

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

4.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The proposed changes by the Government will enable councillors to participate in committee meetings or to designate someone to vote on their behalf in situations where they are unable to attend a meeting.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1** The Ethics and Engagement Committee is invited to note the Government's consultation and response to its consultation on *Remote attendance and proxy voting in local authorities*.
- 5.2** That further reports are presented to Ethics and Engagement Committee when further information is available.

Is this a key decision?

No

Do the exempt information categories apply?

No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

One

List of Background Papers:

None

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