

Arrangements for Multi-location meetings

1. Legislative Framework

1.1 Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the 2021 Act”) requires the Council to make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that its meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which:-

- (a) enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meetings, and
- (b) in the case of meetings required to be electronically broadcast under section 46 of the 2021 Act, to speak to and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by each other.

(hereinafter referred to as “**multi-location meetings**”)

1.2 If the Council revises or replaces its arrangements for multi-location meetings, it must publish the revised or new arrangements. In making arrangements for multi-location meetings, the Council must have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers.

1.3 For the purposes of these multi-location meeting arrangements, “meetings” are formal meetings convened under the Local Government Act 1972 or the Local Government Act 2000 of:-

- (a) Council;
- (b) Cabinet;
- (c) Any Committee or sub-committee of Council or Cabinet;
- (d) Any joint committee where the Council is the host or lead authority

and, for the avoidance of doubt, these meetings include panel hearings held by the Council’s Licensing Committee established under section 6 of the Licensing Act 2003 or a sub-committee established by the Licensing Committee.

1.4 Part 2 of schedule 4 to the 2021 Act amends the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007 to make the approval and adoption of arrangements for multi-location meetings a non-executive function for Council. Once adopted, these arrangements for multi-location meetings will form part of the Council’s published Constitution and will need to be read in conjunction with the Council’s Standing Orders

1.5 Section 47 of the 2021 Act also provides that any reference in the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government Act 2000

- (a) to the attendance, presence or appearance of a person at a Council meeting includes, in relation to a multi-location meeting, attendance, presence or appearance by remote means; and
- (b) the place at which a multi-location meeting is held is not to be read as limited to a single physical location.

1.6 Part 1 of schedule 4 to the 2021 Act also makes consequential amendments to Part 5A and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in relation to the publications of notices, agendas, reports, documents and minutes of multi-location meetings. The Council is required to:-

- (a) publish notice of the meetings electronically at least 3 clear days before the meeting;
- (b) publish details of how to access the meeting remotely and the place in which the meeting is held if it is partly or wholly taking place physically;

- (c) where a multi-location meeting is not open to the public, give public notice of the time and place of the meeting, the fact that it is being held partly by remote means, and that it is not open to the public.
- (d) publish the agenda and reports for multi-location meetings electronically at least 3 clear days before the date of the meeting;
- (e) where the multi-location meeting is partly or wholly taking place physically, make available for the use of members of the public attending the meeting a reasonable number of hard copies of the agenda and of the reports for the meeting;
- (f) provide hard copies of agendas and reports, upon request and on payment of reasonable costs, for any newspapers
- (g) publish electronically within 7 days of the multi-location meeting a written record of the business carried out at the meetings, including a record of the names of who attended the meeting, apologies, declarations of interest, voting and decisions taken (excluding exempt information).
- (h) make copies of all agendas, reports, background documents and minutes of meetings accessible electronically to members of the public for a period of 6 years following the date of the meeting (or provide facilities for inspection or copying of the published documents, on payment of a reasonable charge, if it is not reasonable practicable to publish or access them electronically).

1.7 Section 46 of the 2021 Act requires the Council to make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that:-

- (a) a broadcast of proceedings at formal Council, Cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings is available electronically so that members of the public not in attendance at the meeting can see and hear the proceedings;
- (b) the proceedings are broadcast as they take place, subject to any specified exceptions;
- (c) the broadcast is available electronically for a specified period after the meeting.

1.8 If the Council revises or replaces its arrangements for broadcasting meetings, it must publish the revised or new arrangements. In making arrangements for broadcasting, the Council must have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers, who are also empowered to make Regulations regarding the broadcasting of meetings. The validity of any decision taken at these meetings is not affected by the availability or otherwise of a broadcast (whether as the proceedings take place or afterwards).

2. Purpose of these Arrangements

2.1 The meeting arrangements in **Section 3** (“the **Arrangements**”) set out how the Council intends to discharge its statutory duties under sections 46 and 47 of the 2021 Act in relation to the broadcasting of meetings, and the convening of meetings involving participants in multiple locations. These rules and procedures constitute the mandatory, core requirements for compliance with the legislative framework. As such, they will form part of the Council’s published Constitution and will need to be read in conjunction with the Council’s Standing Orders relating to the conduct of meetings.

2.2 Any provisions in Council Standing Orders or any other parts of the Constitution shall be read subject to these Arrangements and shall take effect as if varied or dis-applied by these Arrangements. In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between anything in these

Arrangements and any rules of procedure in the Constitution, then the provisions of these Arrangements shall take precedence insofar as they relate to multi-location meetings.

- 2.3 However, except as may be varied or dis-applied by the terms of these Arrangements, then all other relevant provisions of Council Standing Orders, and other rules of procedure set out in the Constitution shall continue to apply to all multi-location meetings.
- 2.4 **Section 4** sets out the Council's wider multi-location meetings policy, which reflects the general legislative principles in section 3, while setting out more detailed practices and procedures to ensure that multi-location meetings work efficiently, effectively and accountably. This non-statutory policy will be subject to periodic oversight and review by Democratic Services Committee and should also be considered in conjunction with the Council's wider Public Participation and Engagement Strategy.

3. Multi-location meeting Arrangements

3.1 Location

Any reference in Standing Orders to the “location” of the meeting shall, where the meeting is partly or wholly taking place physically, mean the Council Chamber (or such alternative meeting room with the necessary equipment or facility for remote attendance and electronic broadcasting). The “place” at which the meeting is being held will be the Council Chamber or the designated meeting room and it shall be open to any elected member or member of the public to physically attend the meeting in person. However, elected members shall be entitled to attend remotely from multiple locations, and are not required to be physically present in the meeting place, provided that they are capable of being seen and heard at all times by other Councillors, participants and members of the public attending in person or viewing the broadcast meeting.

In the event that no suitable meeting room is available, with the necessary equipment or facility for remote attendance and electronic broadcasting then, by agreement with the Chair of the meeting, the multi-location meeting can take place wholly by remote means. All references to the “place” of the meeting shall mean the electronic, digital or virtual locations of each of the members who join the meeting remotely.

3.2 Notice and summons to multi-location meetings

At least 3 clear working days before a multi-location meeting (or if the meeting is convened at shorter notice, then at the time it is convened), the designated Proper Officer or his or her representative will publish a **notice** electronically on the Council’s website specifying

- (a) the date, time and place of the meeting;
- (b) the business to be transacted at the meeting;
- (c) where an Extraordinary Meeting is called by members of the Council, the notice shall set out the names of those members
- (d) details of how the public can access the electronic broadcast of the meeting;
- (e) details of those parts of the meeting that will not be open to the public, both in person and remotely;

3.3 At least 3 clear working days before a multi-location meeting (or if the meeting is convened at shorter notice, then at the time it is convened), the designated Proper Officer or his or her representative shall send an authenticated **summons** by electronic mail to every Member of the Council, Cabinet, Committee or sub-committee at their official council e-mail address, giving the date, time and place of each meeting, details of the business to be transacted at the meeting and the link to join the meeting remotely.

If a Member gives notice in writing to the Proper Officer that he/she desires summonses to attend meetings of the Council to be sent to him/her at an address specified in the notice rather than electronically, such summonses must be sent to that member by being left at, or sent by post to, that address.

Want of service of a summons on any Member shall not affect the validity of any meeting.

Except in the case of business required by or under any legislation to be transacted at the annual meeting of the Council and other business brought before that meeting as a matter of urgency in accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders, no business shall be transacted at any meeting than that specified in the summons.

3.4 For the purpose of these Arrangements:-

- (a) Clear days do not include the date of issue, the date of the meeting, Saturdays, Sundays, bank holidays or additional days following a bank holiday;
- (b) references to joining and attending a meeting remotely means joining or attending electronically from multiple locations by means of any equipment or other facility which enables Members who are not in the same place to speak to and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by each other.

3.5 **Access to agendas, reports and information.**

At least 3 clear working days before a multi-location meeting (or if the meeting is convened at shorter notice, then at the time it is convened), the designated Proper Officer or his or her representative shall publish electronic copies of the agenda and reports on the Council's website.

If an item is added to an agenda, copies of which have been published, copies of the item or revised agenda and copies of any report for the meeting relating to the item will be published electronically on the Council website at the time the item is added to the agenda.

An item of business may not be considered at any meeting unless either—

- (a) a copy of the agenda including the item (or a copy of the item) is published electronically at least 3 clear days before the meeting, or, if the meeting is convened at shorter notice, at the time it is convened, or
- (b) by reason of special circumstances, which must be specified in the minutes, the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

3.6 Where the multi-location meeting is partly or wholly taking place physically, the designated Proper Officer or his or her representative shall:-

- (a) make available for the use of members of the public attending the meeting a reasonable number of hard copies of the agenda and of the reports for the meeting; and
- (b) provide hard copies of agendas and reports, upon request and on payment of reasonable costs, for any newspapers.

3.7 If Proper Officer thinks fit, there may be excluded from the copies of reports published electronically under paragraph 3.5 and made available under paragraph 3.6 the whole of a report which, or any part of which, relates only to items during which, in the Proper Officer's opinion, the meeting is likely not to be open to the public. Where the whole or part of a report is excluded it shall be marked "Not for publication", and there must be stated on every copy of the report or part a description, in terms of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, of the exempt information by virtue of which the public are likely to be excluded from the meeting during the item to which the report relates.

3.8 **Attendance**

The attendance, presence or appearance of any Member or other person at a Council meeting includes, in relation to a multi-location meeting, attendance, presence or appearance by remote means.

Remote participation by any Member in any multi-location meeting will count as an official "attendance" for the purposes of the 6 months' rule under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Where a Member has a right to attend any meeting in accordance with any statutory or common law right or under the terms of the Council's Constitution, then that right is to be interpreted as a right to attend by remote access.

A written record of the names of who attended the multi-location meeting, either remotely or in person, and all apologies for absence will be published electronically within 7 days of the date of the meeting. To assist in this process, Members attending in person will be asked to sign an attendance sheet, but there is no legal requirement to do so. Members joining remotely will be automatically recorded on the system.

Apologies for absence should be sent to the Proper Officer or his or her representative in advance of the multi-location meeting. The Chair will announce the names of the members who have sent their apologies at the start of the meeting. Any additional apologies should be reported either verbally at the meeting or submitted remotely in writing by electronic means.

3.9 Quorum

The number of Councillors required to be present for a quorum at any remote meeting shall be as set out in the Constitution. For the purposes of determining whether a quorum of Councillors is present at any multi-location meeting, the Chair shall include all those members in remote attendance at any one time.

If at any time during the multi-location meeting, there is no longer a quorum of participating Members, both in person and in remote attendance, the Chair shall immediately adjourn the meeting. The remaining business shall be considered at a future meeting to be convened on a date and time to be agreed by the Proper Officer in consultation with the Chair.

3.10 Speaking

The order of speaking and the time limits for speeches and questions shall be as set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

No person shall speak until invited to do so by the Chair and shall cease to speak when instructed to do so by the Chair.

If two or more Members indicate that they wish to speak the Chair will ask one to speak and the other(s) will remain silent. While a Member is speaking, other Members will remain silent unless raising a point of order or of personal explanation

When a Member is speaking, no other Member shall interrupt or seek to speak over that Member. If a Member interrupts or speaks over another Member then the Chair will warn that Member about their conduct. If the Member concerned persists in interrupting the speaker then the Chair may move that the Member shall not be heard further. If the Member continues to interrupt after such a motion is carried, the Chair may move that either the Member leaves the meeting (in person or remotely), or that the meeting is adjourned.

3.11 When the Chair opens up a matter for debate or question, Members should indicate their wish to speak by raising their hands, if they are present in person, or by using the chat facility if they are joining the meeting remotely. At the beginning of each agenda item, the Governance Officer will activate the "Raise Hand" application within the chat facility. Members joining remotely should click on the raised hand icon in the chat box and their name will appear in the list of speakers. The Chair will invite Members to speak in the strict order that they have indicated, either in person or remotely.

3.12 If a Member who is attending the meeting remotely wishes to raise an urgent point of order, personal explanation or closure motion, then a message should be written in the chat facility, to request that the Chair allow the Member to speak out of turn.

3.13. **Written motions**

Where the Chair of the meeting requires a motion or amendment to be written out before allowing the matter to be discussed, Members joining the meeting remotely should post their written motion or amendment in the chat box and the Chair will read out the motion or amendment before opening the discussion. If required, the electronic motion or amendment will be written down and hard copies provided for those Members attending in person. Members attending in person should write out their motion or amendment, which will be copied and circulated to the other Members present in person and posted electronically in the chat facility for the benefit of those Members attending remotely. The meeting may be adjourned to allow this to be done.

3.14. **Voting**

Any matter will be decided by a simple majority of votes cast by those Members present in the meeting, wither in person or remotely, at the time when the question was put. Where Committees are acting in some form of quasi- judicial capacity and rules of natural justice apply, then members cannot vote or participate in any decision if they have not been present in the meeting, in person or remotely, throughout that item. In the case of an equality of votes, then the Chair will have a second and casting vote.

3.15 Unless a recorded vote is demanded under Council Standing Orders, the Chair will take the vote by a show of hands by those Members present in person. Members attending remotely should cast their votes electronically using the voting application in the chat box. The Chair will declare whether the motion has been carried or lost once there is a clear majority. This process will be repeated for every agenda item that requires a vote.

3.16 If any Member attending remotely is unable to cast their vote using the electronic voting application, they can submit their vote in writing by adding it to the chat facility and it will be counted with the other votes already cast.

3.17 If a recorded vote is requested, the Chair will ask each Member in alphabetical order to state whether they wish to vote for or against the motion or whether they wish to abstain. The votes will then be counted and recorded. At the conclusion of the voting, the Chair will declare the numbers of votes cast and whether the motion has been carried or lost.

3.18 **Declaration of Interests**

If a Member has any pecuniary or personal interest in any matter under discussion at the multi-location meeting then that interest should be declared as soon as possible by notifying the Chair either through raising their hands, if present in person, or electronically through the chat facility if they are attending remotely. The Chair will then invite the Member to speak and declare the nature of the interest, which will be recorded in the written minutes.

3.19 Where the personal interest is a pecuniary or prejudicial interest and the Member is required to leave the multi-location meeting during the discussion of the item, the Member shall leave the meeting room or immediately disconnect their electronic remote access. The Member should not re-join the meeting, in person or remotely, until notified by the Proper Officer or his or her representative that the item has been concluded.

3.20 Wherever possible, Members should notify the Proper Officer or his or her representative at least 2 working days in advance of the multi-location meeting whether they have any personal or pecuniary interest to declare. The Proper Officer or his or her representative provide a copy of the declaration of interest form to Members for completion and return. For members declaring an interest remotely, the form will be sent by e-mail for completion and return after the meeting. This will be added to the electronic register of members' interests.

3.21 **Interpretation of these Arrangements and Standing Orders**

Where the Chair is required to interpret Standing Orders and the provisions of these Arrangements for multi-location meetings, for remote participation, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to making a ruling. However, the Chair's decision shall be final.

3.22 **Disorderly Conduct by Members**

In accordance with Standing Orders, if any Member persistently disregards the ruling of the Chair by behaving improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs the business of the multi-location meeting, the Chair may move that the Member shall not be heard further. If the Member continues to behave improperly after such a motion is carried, the Chair may move that either the Member leaves the meeting, either in person or remotely, or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

3.23 **Technical issues.**

In the event that the Chair or the Proper Officer identifies a failure of the electronic remote participation facility, the Chair should declare an adjournment while the fault is addressed. If it is not possible to address the fault and the meeting becomes inquorate because of this fault, the meeting will be adjourned until such time as it can be reconvened on a date and time to be agreed by the Proper Officer in consultation with the Chair. If the meeting is quorate, because of the numbers of Members present in person, then it will continue.

3.24 **Access to information**

The Proper Officer or his or her representative shall as soon as reasonably practicable after a multi-location meeting publish electronically on the Council's website copies of:-

- (a) the draft minutes of the meeting, excluding so much of the minutes of proceedings during which the meeting was not open to the public due to the disclosure of exempt information;
- (b) a copy of the agenda for the meeting, and
- (c) a copy of so much of any report for the meeting as relates to any item during which the meeting was open to the public.

3.25 If the draft minutes are not available for publication before the end of 7 working days beginning with the date on which the meeting was held, the Proper Officer or his or her representative shall publish electronically on the council website a not setting out:-

- (a) the names of the members who attended the meeting, and any apologies for absence;
- (b) any declarations of interest;
- (c) any decision taken at the meeting, including the outcomes of any votes, but excluding anything relating to a decision taken when the meeting was not open to the public as discloses exempt information."

3.26 The Proper Officer or his or her representative shall make copies of all agendas, reports, background documents and minutes of multi-location meetings accessible electronically to members of the public for a period of 6 years following the date of the meeting (or provide

facilities for inspection or copying of the published documents, on payment of a reasonable charge, if it is not reasonable practicable to publish or access them electronically).

3.37 **Broadcasting**

All multi-location meetings of formal Council, Cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings will be broadcast live, as they take place, via the Council's website, so that members of the public not in attendance at the meeting can see and hear the proceedings.

If a motion is passed to exclude the press and public from a multi-location meeting while confidential or exempt information is being discussed (as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) under Part 2 of the agenda, then the right of the press and public to see and hear the meeting shall cease and the Proper officer or his or her representative will immediately disconnect the livestream broadcast and their remote access. The remote access rights of any external participants in the multi-location meeting will also be removed.

- 3.38 The recording of the live broadcast will be uploaded onto the Council website within 7 working days from the date of the meeting and will be available for viewing for a period of up to 6 months. Copies of the recording can be downloaded and made available upon request for a period of up to 6 years following the date of the meeting, in accordance with paragraph 3.26

4. **Multi-location meetings policy**

4.1 This multi-location meetings policy sets out more detailed practices and procedures to ensure that multi-location meetings work efficiently, effectively and accountably. This is a non-statutory policy, which will be subject to periodic oversight and review by Democratic Services Committee and should also be considered in conjunction with the Council's wider Public Participation and Engagement Strategy.

4.2 **Background**

Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 enabled local authorities in Wales to introduce voluntary arrangements for remote meetings. The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations") were then introduced on 22nd April 2020 and they enabled Welsh local authorities to hold remote meetings to overcome Covid 19 social distancing restrictions during the pandemic lock-down. All Council meetings have been held remotely since June 2020 using Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Live Event applications, to enable live broadcasts of remote meetings. The Regulations continued in force until 1st May 2021, when they were superseded and replaced by the provisions of sections 46 and 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the 2021 Act"). The 2021 Act imposed a statutory duty on all Welsh local authorities to make and publish arrangements for "hybrid" or multi-location meetings and for the broadcasting of these meetings. Since May 2021, the Council has continued to operate fully remote meetings under the 2021 Act, to comply with Covid restrictions and social distancing requirements. However, the removal of all Covid restrictions means that the Council can now introduce arrangements for hybrid or multi-location meetings where participants have a choice about joining remotely or attending in person.

4.3 As part of the Council's Strategic Covid-Recovery Aims, a New Working Model has been agreed for both elected members and Council staff, based on flexible working arrangements. An integral part of this New Working Model is the use of technology and the freedom to participate remotely in Council meetings. The Council recognises the benefits of multi-location meetings in terms of:

- (a) Improved transparency and democratic decision-making,
- (b) Improved diversity and equality – empowering a wider range of people to take an active role in local democracy and removing barriers to people serving as elected members,
- (c) Improved accessibility, public participation and engagement,
- (d) Improved productivity and efficiency, with greater use of technology and reducing the time and cost of unnecessary travel.
- (e) Improved resilience and sustainability - reducing the carbon footprint of physical meetings and mitigating the risks of people being prevented from attending in-person meetings.
- (f) Improving the arrangements for use of the Welsh language and simultaneous translation.

4.4 The critical principle that underpins this multi-location meeting policy is that all participants are treated equally, whether they are attending in person or remotely. The arrangements for multi-location meetings should ensure that anyone joining remotely should have equal status and should not be disadvantaged by comparison with those attending in person. Remote attendance should not be regarded as second best.

4.5 Therefore, the technology and the protocols for the conduct of multi-location meetings will provide the freedom and flexibility for all Councillors (and any other participants) to either attend in person or remotely. The Council Chamber (or another meeting room with the necessary equipment or facility for remote attendance and electronic broadcasting) will be designated as the physical location for the meeting and any elected member, participant or member of the public will be entitled to attend in person. Elected members (and other participants) will also be able to attend remotely from multiple locations using MS Teams and the screens in the meeting room will ensure that they are capable of being seen and heard at all times by other Councillors,

participants and members of the public attending in person. Members of the public will also be able to view proceedings remotely via the live-stream broadcast of the meeting on the Public-i system, which can be accessed through the agenda hyper-link on Council's web-site. The meeting arrangements will enable one or all of the participants to join remotely or in-person, or any combination of numbers. If all members elected to join remotely, facilities will still be provided in the meeting room for members of the public or other participants to attend in person and view the broadcast proceedings on the screens from the public gallery or seating areas.

- 4.6 In the event that no suitable meeting room is available, with the necessary equipment or facility for remote attendance and electronic broadcasting then, by agreement with the Chair of the meeting, the multi-location meeting can take place wholly by remote means.

4.7 **Council meetings**

All formal meetings will be conducted as multi-location meetings. Elected members and other participants will be able to join the following meetings remotely, which will also be broadcast live:-

- (a) Council;
- (b) Cabinet;
- (c) Any Committee or sub-committee of Council or Cabinet;
- (d) Any joint committee where the Council is the host or lead authority;
- (e) Panel hearings held by the Council's Licensing Committee established under section 6 of the Licensing Act 2003 or a sub-committee established by the Licensing Committee.

There may be exceptional occasions where physical attendance may not be possible if there is no suitable meeting room available with the necessary equipment, in which case the multi-location meeting will take place wholly by remote means. However, it will not be permissible for any meeting to be held entirely in person.

- 4.8 Where a meeting room is available with the necessary equipment or facility for remote attendance and electronic broadcasting (usually the Council Chamber), then provision will be made for disability access and any other visual or hearing aids to ensure that those attending in person are able to participate on the same footing as those attending remotely. A public gallery or seating area will be set aside for the public and the press. The display screens and audio equipment in the meeting room will enable those in attendance see and hear those joining remotely, and be seen and heard by them at all times.

4.9 **Multi-location meeting platforms**

Microsoft Teams is the supported and secure application used by the Council for joining multi-location meetings remotely. It has functionality for audio, video, and screen sharing and you do not need to be a member of an organisation (or have a Teams account) to join a Teams meeting. For smaller closed meetings, the MS Teams meeting application can be used. However, for larger numbers of participants and live broadcasting of public meetings, the MS Live Event facility will be utilised.

- 4.10 The multi-location meetings will be broadcast live using the live-streaming facility of the Public-i system in the Council Chamber, which integrates with MS Teams and also with the democratic services governance software, to provide greater functionality. The display screens in the meeting room will enable all those attending in person to see and hear those participants who have joined remotely via MS Teams. The cameras and projectors in the meeting room will focus on the individual member or participant who is speaking and their name will be displayed on the screen to identify them for the purposes of the live broadcast. When a member or participant is

speaking remotely, then his or her name and image will also be displayed on the screen for the purposes of the live broadcast.

4.11 **Notices, agendas, reports and exempt matters**

Democratic Services will publish the agenda and reports for multi-location meetings on the Council's website at least 3 clear working days before the date of the meeting and will notify Councillors by e-mail of the date and time of the meeting, together with a link to the electronic agenda and reports. Paper copies of agendas will not be made available to members. The 2021 Act provides for electronic publication of agendas, reports and minutes and does not require printed copies of documents to be made available to members. Hard copies of agendas will be provided, on request, for any members of the public or press attending meetings in person. However, the Chair can be provided with hard copies of meeting papers, if required, to assist with the management of proceedings.

- 4.12 The Governance Team in Democratic Services will be responsible for organising the multi-location meetings. They will send a meeting request via Microsoft Teams/Live Events to all members and other participants, which will also appear in Outlook calendars. This enables them to be the 'organiser/producer' of the multi-location meetings and gives them more functionality in terms of controlling the proceedings and the live broadcast from the meeting room, in order to support the Chair. Elected members should, wherever possible, advise the Governance Team in advance of the meeting about whether they intend to join the multi-location remotely or attend in person, to give an indication about attendance numbers and to assist with the organisation of the meeting.
- 4.13 It is recommended that Members **use their Council laptops** for participating remotely in multi-location meetings and any tablets or smart phones are used to open the agenda and documents. This will assist with any technical support that may be required. Those members attending the meeting in person should use their laptops or tablets to access the agenda and documents but should not open their MS Team application, to maintain bandwidth and the audio and visual quality of the broadcast. Members attending in person are advised to fully charge their laptops and devices before the meeting because of the limited numbers of charging points in the Chamber.
- 4.14 Notices of meetings will comply with 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 multi-location Cabinet meetings. For all other Council meetings, notices will comply with Part 5A and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the 2021 Act).
- 4.15 Public notice of all multi-location meetings will be published electronically on the Council website at least three clear days before the meeting (or at the time it is convened, if it is convened at shorter notice). The notice will include details of how to access the meeting and the place, date and time of the meeting, if it is partly taking place physically. Where a formal meeting is taking place which is not open to the public, the notice will include the date and time of the meeting and the fact that it is not open to the public.
- 4.16 The agenda and reports for multi-location meetings (including late reports) will be published on the Council website of the authority. Paper agendas will be made available to members of the public attending meetings in person. Background papers relating to written reports considered at multi-location meetings must now be proactively published on the Council website, not merely be available for public inspection upon request (although, exceptionally, if it is impractical to do this, they must be open for public inspection). This will require the automatic placement in the public domain of all background documents listed in written reports. Wherever possible, electronic copies of all background documents that have been used in the preparation of the report should be attached to or embedded within the published reports. Reports writers will, therefore, need to carefully consider how background papers are identified, produced and prepared for publication.

- 4.17. A written record of the names of the elected members who attended the meeting will be recorded in the minutes, alongside apologies, declarations of interest and decisions made. The draft minutes will be published electronically on the Council website as soon as possible after the date of the meeting. Where the full minutes are not available within 7 working days of the meeting, then a written record of the meeting will be published, with the details of attendances, declarations and decisions made. There is no longer any legal requirement for members' signatures to be recorded but members attending a meeting in person will be asked to sign an attendance sheet, to assist with the preparation of the minutes.
- 4.18 If the press and public are excluded from a multi-location meeting while confidential or exempt information is being discussed (as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) under Part 2 of the agenda, then the right of the press and public to see and hear the meeting shall cease. Any members of the press or public attending in person will be required to leave the meeting room and the Democratic Services officer will immediately disconnect the livestream broadcast and the remove the remote access rights of any external participants. Members (and any officers) who remain as remote participants in the Part 2 meeting should ensure that no other person is able to see or hear the confidential discussion from their laptop/device. Any such disclosure of confidential information would be a breach of the Officer or Members Code of Conduct. The business to be conducted at meetings will be organised to ensure that all exempt and confidential reports and discussions are listed at the end of the agenda under Part 2 and that confidential reports containing exempt information are clearly identified and are not publicly accessible.
- 4.19 Copies of all agendas, reports, background documents and minutes of multi-location meetings will remain accessible electronically to members of the public for a period of 6 years following the date of the meeting. The documents will be uploaded and can be accessed electronically via the Council website. Where it is not reasonably practicable to publish or access them electronically, Democratic services will make arrangements for public inspection or copying of the published documents, on payment of a reasonable charge.
- 4.20 The recording of the live broadcast will be uploaded onto the Council website within 7 working days from the date of the meeting and will be available for viewing for a period of up to 6 months. Copies of the recording can be downloaded and made available upon request for a period of up to 6 years following the date of the meeting.

4.21 **Meeting attendance**

If any elected member joins any multi-location meeting, either in person or remotely, for any part of the meeting, then this will count as an official "attendance" for the purposes of the 6 months' rule under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972. For a member to be in attendance remotely he or she must be capable of participating in the meeting or part of the meeting and must be capable of being seen and heard by the other members.

- 4.22 Remote participation in any multi-location meeting will be automatically recorded in the participants list in MS Teams. Members attending in person will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for record purposes, although there is no legal requirement to do so. All attendances will be formally recorded in the published minutes.
- 4.23 Any apologies for absence should be sent to the Governance Team in advice of the multi-location meeting. The Chair will be provided with the list of apologies received and will announce the names of the members who have sent their apologies at the start of the meeting. Any additional apologies should be reported either verbally at the meeting or recorded in the chat box where a member is attending remotely.
- 4.24 If a member has any pecuniary or personal interest in any matter under discussion at the multi-location meeting then that interest should be declared at the appropriate time by notifying the

Chair in person or remotely in the chat facility. The Chair will then invite the member to speak and declare the nature of the interest, which will be recorded in the written minutes.

- 4.25 Where the personal interest is a pecuniary or prejudicial interest and the member is required to leave the multi-location meeting during the discussion of the item, the member will need to leave the meeting room or disconnect their remote access by clicking the Leave button or clicking the red square with the white telephone in the toolbar. The Democratic Services officer will notify the member that the item has been concluded and that he or she may re-join the meeting. Where the member has disconnected their remote access, they will be contacted by e-mail, text or telephone to confirm that they can reconnect and re-join the meeting remotely. The Chair should check that any member has left and re-joined the meeting remotely at the appropriate time by clicking on the 'show participants' button in the toolbar next to the chat icon.
- 4.26 Wherever possible, members should notify Democratic Services at least 2 working days in advance of the remote meeting whether they have any personal or pecuniary interests to declare. The Democratic Services officers provide copies of declarations of interest forms for members declaring an interest in person at the meeting and will e-mail forms to members attending remotely, for completion and return following the meeting. The completed and signed declarations of interest forms will be added to the electronic public register of members' interests.
- 4.27 In the event of any failure of the technology for remote attendance, so that all remote participants are unable to continue to participate fully in the meeting, the Chair should declare an adjournment while the technical fault is addressed. If it is not possible to address the fault and the meeting becomes inquorate because of this fault, the meeting will be abandoned and reconvened at a later date. However, if the meeting remains quorate because of the numbers of members attending in person, then it will continue, unless the Chair considers that this would be undemocratic because of the nature of the business being discussed and the numbers of members who have been prevented from attending and voting remotely. If an individual member who has joined the meeting remotely loses internet connection or otherwise has technical difficulties, then the meeting will continue while those issues are being resolved.
- 4.28 There is no facility for pausing and restarting the live stream. Therefore, during any adjournment, remote participants should switch off their microphones and cameras. The Chair will confirm the time for recommencing the meeting and all remote participants will need to re-join the meeting at the restart time.
- 4.29 **Participation in multi-location meetings**
- Councillors who intend to participate remotely are encouraged to join the meeting promptly (i.e. at least 10 minutes before the scheduled start time) in order to avoid disrupting the meeting. Attendees should use the link within the calendar invite for the meeting which will say '**Join Microsoft Teams Meeting**', which will open the Microsoft Teams application on the laptop automatically. Any member having technical issues opening the link or joining the meeting should e-mail or call the meeting organiser/presenter.
- 4.30 Prior to participating remotely in any Council meetings, all members and officers should activate the corporate background to avoid unnecessary distractions or inappropriate images being shown on the screen. The Governance Team will send the corporate image to all participants, with instructions as to how the picture can be saved and opened as the background image within MS Teams.
- 4.31 Members who are joining remotely should ensure that they **click on the chat icon** in the tool bar as they will need this to indicate to the Chair that they wish to speak or cast their vote in relation to any item on the agenda. If this is not activated then they will not be able to fully participate in the meeting. The chat facility will appear on the right hand side of the screen and will be visible to all the other participants in the meeting, including those members attending in person and viewing the screens in the meeting room.

- 4.32 Remote participants should also ensure that, where confidential matters are being discussed remotely, no other person can hear the audio broadcast. The relevant provisions of the Officer and member Codes of Conduct regarding the disclosure of confidential information will apply at all times to remote participation in meetings. Where other people may be present in the room, then the use of headphones or earphones may be appropriate.
- 4.33 Members and other participants are requested to notify Democratic Services before the meeting whether they intend attending in person or remotely, to enable the Governance Officer to check that all required participants are present at the start of the meeting. However, with live broadcasts, meetings will need to commence at the designated time and will not be delayed until everyone has joined, either in person or remotely. Members will be able to join the meeting later, and this will count for attendance purposes, but where Committees are acting in some form of quasi-judicial capacity and rules of natural justice apply, then members cannot participate in any debate or decision if they have not been present throughout that item.
- 4.34 The Democratic Services team will also have details of any members of the public or external participants who have been invited to participate. If they are joining remotely, they will be sent an invitation to join the meeting with the appropriate appointment, link or dialling code. If they are attending in person, then they will be notified of the place and time of the meeting.
- 4.35. The meetings will be live-streamed using the Public-i system and the press and public will be able to access the meeting remotely by clicking on the link published on the Council's website. They will be able to see and hear the live debate but they will not be able to participate.
- 4.36 The Chair will ask all members and officers joining remotely to **turn off and mute all unnecessary microphones**, unless they are speaking. This prevents background noise, which is intrusive and disruptive during the meeting, and also saves bandwidth and connectivity. The Governance Officer will also monitor this and will be able to mute microphones when they are not in use. Remote participants are reminded **to turn their microphones back on when they are invited to speak**. The Governance Officer cannot un-mute microphones.
- 4.37 The Chair will also ask all remote participants to **turn off all unnecessary cameras**. This helps to maintain bandwidth and call quality and avoids anyone being filmed/recorded without realising. If the Chair is attending remotely then he/she should keep their camera on at all times. There is no facility for the Governance Officer to turn off other participants' cameras (unlike muting microphones), although they are able to change the live display. The Chair will also remind members and participants attending remotely to **activate the chat box** for the purposes of speaking and voting.
- 4.38 The Democratic Services team will act as meeting organisers/presenters and will support the Chair in managing the remote attendance. They will be responsible for managing the live-stream broadcast and will operate the cameras to display the speakers on the screen. They will ensure that the chat box facility is activated for remote participants to indicate their wish to speak and will operate the electronic poll for remote voting. At the direction of the Chair, the Governance Team may pause or adjourn the meeting by taking down the live stream or live-feed from public viewing and may mute any speaker at any time. The Governance Team shall also allocate different levels of access to people logging-in remotely (based on whether they are the Chair, a Councillor, officer or participant).
- 4.39 The order of speaking and the time limits for speeches and questions are set out in the Council's Standing Orders and the Arrangements for Multi-location meetings. When the Chair opens up a matter for debate or question, members should indicate their wish to speak by raising their hand if they are present in person or by using the chat facility if they are attending remotely. At the beginning of each agenda item, the Governance Officer will activate the "Raise Hand" application within the chat facility for the benefit of those members attending remotely. Members should click on the raised hand icon in the chat box and their name will appear in the list of speakers. The Chair will invite Members to speak in the strict order that they have indicated, in person or via the chat box.

- 4.40 If a Member attending remotely wishes to raise an urgent point of order, personal explanation or closure motion, then a message should be written in the chat facility, to request that the Chair allow the Member to speak out of turn.
- 4.41 The messaging function in the chat window should only be used for communicating and interacting with the Chair. Members attending remotely should not use the chat box to communicate with each another as this function needs to be kept clear to allow the Chair to manage the meeting effectively. Any messages posted in the chat window will be available for all participants to read.
- 4.42 All remote participants in the multi-location meeting should comply with the following etiquette at all times:-
- (a) Join the meeting promptly to avoid any unnecessary interruptions
 - (b) Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
 - (c) Switch off your camera if you are not speaking.
 - (d) Indicate a wish to speak by using the chat function
 - (e) Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair
 - (f) Speak clearly
 - (g) If referring to a specific page or slide, mention the page or slide number
 - (h) Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.

4.43 **External participants**

All Members and Council staff have Microsoft Teams installed on their laptop/device linked to their email account and therefore they can join a remote meeting using this application. External participants can also use the Teams application, by downloading it to their laptop, smartphone or tablet. They can be sent the meeting request via email and if a participant is included in this way, they can use all the functions of Teams (video / chat) to participate remotely in the meeting. This can be used for external presenters at Committee meetings or where public speaking is allowed (for example, Planning Committee). Alternatively, the Democratic Services Officer can add an external participant in part of a meeting as a voice call at the appropriate time. There is also provision for a conference call number and ID to be given to external participants, to enable them to join the meeting remotely. Again, this will be arranged by the Governance Team as part of the meeting organisation/production.

- 4.44 External remote participants will require access to appropriate equipment. 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 do not have a laptop with an integrated camera) and ideally should use headphones to avoid background noise.
- 4.45 Democratic Services will assist remote participants in resolving any basic technical problems before or during a multi-location meeting, ensuring that they know how to mute and unmute themselves, to activate and disable video, to check their internet connection etc. IT staff will be on call staff to deal with more complex technical issues. Participants will be advised about using the “raised” hand facility as well as etiquette around muting and unmuting when speaking. If the “raise hand” feature is not usable for those joining on mobile or on a tablet, then remote participants may have to indicate to the Chair on screen or through the audio link that they wish to speak.

- 4.46 External participants will be required to check the environment around them before joining a meeting remotely to ensure that lighting and background is suitable, to avoid visual distractions and the inadvertent display of personal information. Mobile telephones and onscreen notifications should also be set to silent to avoid any unnecessary disturbance.
- 4.47 The Protocols and Procedures for Planning Committee and Licensing panel hearings should also be read as if varied or dis-applied by the provisions of this the Arrangements and Policy for multi-local meetings and in the case of any conflict or inconsistency then terms of the Arrangements and Policy shall take precedence insofar as they relate to remote attendance at meetings and hearings.
- 4.48 Where external participants have the right to speak at meetings, they have the right to attend the meeting in person or remotely. It may be advisable for external participants to attend in person, if they do not have access to, or are unfamiliar with, the necessary technology for remote participation. Where external participants wish to join the meeting remotely but they do not have access to the necessary technology, then the Democratic Services team will arrange for the participant to attend the Council offices and use a Council laptop. External participants may also be required to attend the meeting in person if this is considered necessary for the efficient conduct of the meeting, to ensure that they speak and leave the meeting at the appropriate time. A pre-recorded speech may also be used, where appropriate.
- 4.50 **Voting**
- Any matter will be decided by a simple majority of votes cast by those Members present in the meeting, wither in person or remotely, at the time when the question was put. In the case of an equality of votes, then the Chair will have a second and casting vote. Unless a recorded vote is demanded under Council Standing Orders, the Chair will take the vote by a show of hands by those Members present in person. Members attending remotely should cast their votes electronically using the voting application in the chat box.
- 4.51 When a motion has been put to the vote, the Democratic Services officer will enable the Polling application in the chat box. Members voting remotely must ensure that they have the chat functionality enabled and open on the right hand side of the screen in order to cast their votes. A voting survey will appear in the chat box on the right hand side of the screen and with options to indicate whether a member wished to vote For, Against or Abstain. Members should click on the circle alongside the option that they wish to vote for, followed by the "Submit Vote" box underneath it.
- 4.52 If a Member makes a mistake when voting remotely, they can click the correct option and submit the vote again and it will override the original vote option submitted. The Chair will allow sufficient time for members to cast their votes correctly. The Poll will update in real time. The votes will be automatically counted as they are submitted and are visible to all participants in the meeting. Electronic votes are recorded on the system but individual votes are not identified on the screen and the chat room Poll is not available on the live stream for public viewing. If the Polling function fails or any Member is unable to cast their vote remotely, they can submit their vote in writing by adding it to the chat facility and it will be counted with the other votes already cast.
- 4.53 The Chair will declare whether the motion has been carried or lost once there is a clear majority of votes cast in person and remotely. This process will be repeated for every agenda item that requires a vote.
- 4.54 If a recorded vote is requested, the Chair will ask each Member in alphabetical order to state whether they wish to vote for or against the motion or whether they wish to abstain. The votes will then be counted and recorded. At the conclusion of the voting, the Chair will declare the numbers of votes cast and whether the motion has been carried or lost.

4.55 **Chairing**

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 some members and participants are attending in person and others are joining the meeting remotely. It may, therefore, be advisable for Chairs to attend multi-location meetings in person, wherever possible, as this will make it easier for officers to provide face-to-face technical and governance support in managing the meeting. However, Chairs are able to attend multi-location meetings remotely, if they choose to do so.

4.56 Chairs have a particular responsibility to prepare for the meeting 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 members, to determine:

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

4.57 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. Chairs should:

- (a) Think about the accessibility of the meeting to the public, and whether there are any things they can do 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;
- (b) 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;
- (c) 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;
- (d) Provide a reminder of meeting arrangements and policies, particularly relating to conduct and voting arrangements;
- (e) At the beginning of the meeting, Chairs should remind participants of the protocols and arrangements and explain to those members of the public present in the meeting room that the proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live. The images and sound recording may also be used for training purposes within the Council. Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However, by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, they are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.
- (f) 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.

4.58 The “balance” between individuals in a room, and those joining by remote means, will have a significant effect on how business will be transacted. Therefore, it is important that Chairs and their support officers know in advance of the meeting which members intend to attend physically and who 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 essential. This may include:

- (a) 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;
- (b) 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;
- (c) Planning debate to be themed or otherwise structured rather than inviting comments generally, to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute;
- (d) Ensuring that reports reflect the above sets of circumstances.

4.59 **Training**

Participation in remote meetings will also require a fundamental change in culture and, therefore, elected members will need to be fully trained and confident in using the technology in order to contribute effectively to the debate and decision-making. The role of the Chair will become even more important in managing the conduct of the remote meeting in a structured way. Therefore, additional training will be required for those members who Chair remote meetings, particularly their interaction with other members and officers and the use of electronic speaking and voting applications.

- 4.60 All elected members will be provided with initial training as part of their induction programme and a more comprehensive programme of training will be delivered as part of the on-going member-development process, tailored to the particular needs and roles of individual Chairs, members and Committees.