

Standards Committee



2 December 2024

Title	Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Karen Limmer Interim Group Head of Corporate Governance
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	n/a
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Committee decision.
Recommendations	<p>Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the report; and 2. Consider the proposed response to MHCLG.
Reason for Recommendation	MHCLG has issued an open consultation 'Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings'. A draft response has been prepared.

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MHCLG issued a consultation following an announcement at Local Government Association conference on 24 October 2024 by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote engagement in local democracy. • Modernise processes to provide some flexibility • Diversify representation • Enhance resilience in case of local or national emergencies
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond to the consultation by 18 December 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond to MHCLG |
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1.1 This report seeks to respond to the consultation issued by Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 24 October 2024 and which was announced by the Secretary of State at the LGA conference on 24 October 2024.

2. Key issues

2.1 The Consultation document in full is attached at Appendix A.

2.2 Members will recall that during lockdown in March 2020, local government encountered a number of difficulties in carrying out its business and the Government brought in provisions for meetings to be held remotely.

2.3 These provisions were temporary, in order to cover the situation where business could not be transacted in the normal way, as Standing Orders required members to be in attendance at meetings in order to vote. Those provisions did not continue but since then there has been strong lobbying to governments to amend the rules permanently.

2.4 This Consultation relates to proposals for both remote attendance and for proxy voting.

2.5 The Consultation has been circulated to all members for their input.

2.6 Since lockdown the use of technology for remote meetings has become common place and everyone is more familiar with the operation of the technology, but there still remain issues around confidentiality for example, and these would need to be addressed in specific guidance, as during lockdown.

2.7 The Consultation is also considering the use of proxy voting, as may be done by companies. This may well replace the way substitutes are provide for currently.

2.8 There are 13 questions in the consultation documents which is to be completed on line.

3. Consultation: Proposed response

3.1 Option 1: Attached at Appendix B is a proposed response which members of the Committee may amend to capture the views of all members.

3.2 Option 2: Decide not to respond.

4. Financial management comments

4.1 There are no financial implications.

5. Risk management comments

5.1 There are no risk issues.

6. Procurement comments

6.1 There are no procurement issues.

7. Legal comments

8. Following consultation, there may be changes to legislation to bring forward any new provisions. No timetable has yet been published. Any changes may also require amendments to the Constitution in due course.

9. Other considerations

9.1 None.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 The Consultation document sets out the relevant considerations.

11. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

11.1 n/a

12. Timetable for implementation

12.1 A Response is required to be submitted by 18 December 2024.

13. Contact

13.1 Karen Limmer Interim Monitoring Officer K.Limmer@spelthorne.gov.uk

**Please submit any material questions to the Committee Chair and Officer
Contact by two days in advance of the meeting.**

Background papers: none

Appendix A: Consultation document

Appendix B: Draft response