

Response ID ANON-N2UZ-433H-H

Submitted to **Local Authority Remote Meetings - Call for Evidence**

Submitted on **2021-04-05 11:02:38**

Your personal data

1 Are you happy to continue?

Please tick this box if you are happy to continue:

Yes

Introduction

2 What is your name?

Name:

Marj Powner

3 What is your email address?

Email:

friendsofcarringtonmoss@gmail.com

4 What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Friends of Carrington Moss

5 Where in the UK is your organisation based?

England

6 What type of organisation are you responding on behalf of?

Please select an option from the drop-down list below:

Other (please specify)

If you selected other, please specify:

Community Group which regularly attends a number of meetings

Scope of this Call for Evidence

Purpose of this Call for Evidence

Terminology

Background

The Current Arrangements

7 Generally speaking, how well do you feel the current remote meetings arrangements work?

Very Well

Please explain your answer in more detail, though note you will be asked about specific advantages and disadvantages of remote meetings in further questions:

Whilst it is acknowledged that some people did, initially, find remote meetings more challenging than others - spending time training people (sometimes on a 1-2-1 basis over the phone) made it possible for more people to participate and to feel connected (which was especially important during the pandemic).

Permanent Arrangements

8 Generally speaking, do you think local authorities in England should have the express ability to hold at least some meetings remotely on a permanent basis?

Yes

Please explain your answer in more detail.:

There will always be a place for face to face meetings but the cost (both personal and financial) of such meetings should be considered. It should also be remembered that, generally, it is the public purse that funds such meetings. In the commercial world, remote meetings have been the norm for many years, staff are more productive and people become more technically competent and able to participate more frequently and more fully in a wider range of meetings.

Benefits of Remote Meetings

9 What do you think are some of the benefits of remote meetings?

More accessible for local authority members, Reduction in travel time for members, Meetings more easily accessed by local residents, Greater transparency for meetings, Documents (e.g. minutes, agendas, supporting papers) are more accessible, Other (please specify below)

For each benefit you have selected, please explain each of your answers in more detail:

There needs to be specific training for people Chairing such meetings to ensure they are able to do so in an orderly fashion and to ensure there is greater equality of speaking time.

Please upload a file using this link:

No file uploaded

Cost of remote meetings

10 [For local authorities only] Have you seen a reduction in costs since implementing remote meetings in your authority?

Not Answered

Please explain your answer in more detail.:

Please upload a file using this link:

No file uploaded

Disadvantages of Remote Meetings

11 What do you think are some of the disadvantages of the remote meetings arrangements?

Meetings are less accessible for local authority members of local residents who have a poor-quality internet connection, Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who are unfamiliar with video conferencing/technology

For each disadvantage you have selected, please explain each of your answers in more detail:

For each disadvantage you have selected, please explain any suggestions you have to mitigate/overcome them.:

Most of the disadvantages can be addressed with good training. More focus should be given to improving internet connectivity than building new roads!

Advantages of Physical Meetings

12 What do you think are some of the main advantages of holding face-to-face meetings, as opposed to remote meetings?

Please provide your answer in the box below:

Face to face meetings should be held when there is a need for personal interaction of some sort (such as in workshops where people collaborate to develop materials), where there is a need for confidentiality (although we should be able to fully trust our public servants and politicians) or where there is an element of "bad news" to be given.

Constraints on Remote Meetings

13 If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, for which meetings do you think they should have the option to hold remote meetings?

For most meetings with a few exceptions (please specify)

Please explain your answer in more detail.:

Any public meeting should be held remotely to ensure as many citizens as possible are able to participate. It is possible for some people to be "in the room" and others to be dialled in remotely - but again good training needs to be given to ensure the people who are face to face do not dominate the meeting.

14 If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, in which circumstances do you think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings?

Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer in more detail.:

As mentioned above, any meeting which is open to the public should be able to be accessed remotely.

15 Would you have any concerns if local authorities in England were given the power to decide for themselves which meetings, and in what circumstances, they have the option to hold remote meetings?

Yes

Please explain your answer in more detail.:

Some LAs may decide not to make public meetings available remotely, which will restrict access to many citizens. That would be a step backwards.

16 If yes, do you have any suggestions for how your concerns could be mitigated/overcome?

Please provide your answer in the box below:

As mentioned above, any meeting which is open to the public should be able to be accessed remotely. It is possible for some people to be "in the room" and others to be dialled in remotely - but again good training needs to be given to ensure the people who are face to face do not dominate the meeting.

Public Sector Equality Duty

17 In your view, would making express provision for English local authorities to meet remotely particularly benefit or disadvantage any individuals with protected characteristics e.g. those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?

Yes

Please explain your answer in more detail.:

I believe it would make it possible for more people with protected characteristics to participate in public life - so a huge benefit.