

Society of Local Council Clerks

Guidance on Remote Meetings

The following information has been provided from the SLCC website regarding future meetings of Town and Parish Councils.

In summary, the Parish Council can continue to hold its meetings remotely, up to at least 4 July 2021, at which time, it is expected that further government advice will be published. It is also permissible to hold hybrid meetings so that some Members can access via Zoom and others attend in person.

If the Parish Council wishes to revert to physical meetings, it will need to find a venue which is large enough to allow members of the public to attend. It is not legal to restrict their ability to attend. This is a statutory provision.

1. Government Confirms Remote Meetings Legislation will not be Extended

In a letter to all council leaders yesterday (25 March 2021), Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Luke Hall MP has confirmed that legislation permitting remote meetings will not be extended in England. [A copy of the letter can be viewed here.](#)

In his letter the Minister explains that extending the regulations beyond 7 May requires primary legislation and, given the 'severe pressure' on the government's legislative programme, it had been 'concluded that it is not possible to bring forward emergency legislation on this issue at this time'. Citing the continuing progress of the vaccination programme, the drop in numbers of cases of Covid-19 and the Government roadmap out of lockdown as key considerations in their decision, he recognised the concerns surrounding holding face-to-face meetings but stated that it is for 'local authorities to apply the Covid-19 guidance to ensure meetings take place safely'. [Click here to view the updated guidance on the safe use of council buildings.](#)

It was also announced that the Government had launched an open consultation – Local authority meetings: call for evidence, which seeks to understand the experience of conducting remote meetings and will inform any decision on introducing legislation to make these arrangements permanent. This consultation will run for 12 weeks and closes on 17 June 2021. It is open to views from all of the UK, including Wales, who have already introduced legislation to meet remotely via the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act which comes into force on 1 May 2021. [Click here to view the consultation.](#)

2. What is the latest advice on council meetings?

Following the Government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4th July 2021, NALC and SLCC strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face-to-face contact, for the present time. Local councils have the powers to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021 and so most councils will have no need to meet in person. Furthermore, local councils have the duty to allow the public to observe council meetings without placing restrictions on the number attending, which many council meeting venues will not be able to accommodate in a safe way at this time.

NALC and SLCC will be updating their guidance on remote meetings shortly¹ to include information on how to approach 'hybrid meetings' where some people attend in person and others join remotely.

Annual Parish Meeting (England) & Community Meetings (Wales).



¹ This information was published on 25 March 2021.