

Full Council

Report Title:	Consultation – Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings
Meeting Date:	19 November 2024
Contact Officer:	Lizzie Fuller, Committee Services & Processes Officer

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide information on the Government's consultation to enable remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings.

Action Required

2. To provide comments on the consultation to form the Town Council's response.
3. Councillors may submit an individual response to the consultation.

Background

4. In June 2021, Thame Town Council submitted a response to the Government's call for evidence on Local Authority Remote Meetings (Appendix A, as noted at Full Council 22/6/21).
5. Temporary legislation was put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic to enable remote meetings to lawfully take place, however this was removed in May 2021. Since then, there has not been legislation to permit council meetings to take place remotely and the council must follow the legislation specified in the Local Government Act 1972.

Consultation

6. The Government is now seeking views on the detail and practical implications of allowing remote and hybrid attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings in England
7. Full details of the proposals and the 13 consultation questions can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at-local-authority-meetings/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at-local-authority-meetings>
8. The council should consider the consultation and agree comments to submit as the Town Council's representation to the consultation. Alternatively, the council may choose to delegate the response to an Officer and/or choose for Councillors to submit individual responses instead.
9. The practicalities for Thame Town Council implementing remote attendance may be limited by current infrastructure (costs have been quoted in the region of £30k to replace

current audio-visual systems in the Upper Chamber with equipment that will enable virtual attendance, however additional investment will be needed to address acoustic issues). The council should consider the potential benefits of this legislation to the wider sector.

10. As part of the consultation, the Government intends to give local authorities the flexibility to allow elected members to attend formal council meetings remotely.

Resource Appraisal

11. None other than Officer time to collate / submit a response to the consultation.

Risk Assessment

12. Although there are no risks associated with responding or not, the proposed changes, if implemented, pose a major change to council meeting legislation and procedures, so it is considered important that the council inputs to this consultation. Although the option to hold remote meetings would not be a legal requirement, as it will be for councils to decide and update their Standing Orders accordingly.

Legal Powers:

- Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12

Recommendation

- i) To consider and agree comments to submit as the Town Council's representation to the consultation.*