

GWYNEDD COUNCIL



Committee:	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting:	17 February 2022
Title of Item:	Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
Purpose:	To present an update on meeting arrangements in accordance with Part 3 of the aforementioned Act - Hybrid meetings.
Contact Officer(s):	Geraint Owen, Head of Democracy Services and Vera Jones, Democracy and Language Manager

Report to a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee accepts the report for information.

2. DEVELOPMENTS

COUNCIL DECISION - 02/12/2021

1. The Full Council adopted arrangements for holding future Council meetings at its meeting on 2 December 2021. It was decided that meetings of the Full Council, Planning Committee and Scrutiny Committees would be held from a location (hybrid meetings), with the remainder remaining as virtual meetings. Cabinet meetings will also be held from a location (hybrid) - with the Cabinet making this decision at its meeting on 30 November 2021.
2. Responsibility for implementing and determining the implementation date was given to the Head of Democracy Services in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Chair of Democratic Services Committee and Council Chair.
3. In addition, any arrangements needed to wait for Covid-19 restrictions to be lifted. During the first weeks of 2022 the situation in relation to Covid-19 restrictions has changed frequently and we have faced instructions not to attend the offices for some weeks. This led to a delay by a number of weeks as we were unable to go to

the chambers to test and learn about the new hybrid system whilst the restrictions were in place.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

4. However, we have proceeded with technical developments, but have also faced challenges in this regard. The provision is in place and has been tested by the Head of Democracy Services who supports the solutions. This will mean that Councillors will be able to take part in hybrid meetings at the chamber or remotely.
5. One thing which has become clear having undertaken the trials to date is that the experience will be DIFFERENT to the arrangements pre-Covid. There is far more to consider when chairing hybrid meetings. Specific arrangements must be implemented and followed, and everybody on the floor of the chamber and joining remotely will have to respect those arrangements in order to allow a meeting to proceed without any problems.

MEETINGS PROTOCOL

6. In addition to the technical developments, the protocol for holding virtual meetings will be updated and a protocol for holding hybrid meetings will be developed. This is essential and needs to be in place prior to undertaking a hybrid meeting of one of the Council's committees.

NEXT STEPS

7. Trials to date have highlighted that considerable preparation is needed in order to ensure the best possible experience for all users in hybrid meetings. Further trials will need to be held of the hybrid arrangements, giving opportunities for officers (from the democracy team mainly) to learn about the new arrangements and familiarise themselves with them. In addition, the time spent trialling will be used to start training member and Chairs on the technical aspects of these meetings and good practice (soft elements that need to be considered). This will assist us to prepare for training new Councillors and chairs from May 2022 onwards.