

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

3rd October 2022

### **Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services - Mr Craig Griffiths.**

#### **Matter for Decision**

#### **Wards Affected:**

All Wards

#### **Multi Location Meeting Policy**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

The Democratic Services Committee is requested to consider the draft Multi Location Meetings Policy and to provide any appropriate feedback before commending to Council for approval.

#### **Background**

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Local Authorities are required to put in place, and publish arrangements for multi-location meetings (that is, formal meetings where participants may not all be in the same physical place.)

Alongside the legally mandated arrangements, the statutory guidance states that Local Authorities should develop a wider policy setting out the detailed systems chosen by the Authority for the operation of its multi-location meetings.

The draft Multi Location Meeting Policy reflects the statutory guidance where it states that the exact contents will be agreed at a local level. It is suggested that the policy includes:

- How to decide which meetings will have a physical provision made for them and which will be conducted wholly through remote means.
- Which online meeting platform will be used
- How formal notices will be issued, and the publication of agendas and minutes
- How exempt matters will be dealt with
- How participants who sit as part of committees or bodies subject to the Act will be able to access and participate in the meeting (including support and advice on technology, behavioural and conduct issues).
- How observers (including the public and the press) will be able to access the meeting, and how they may actively participate in the meeting where needed.
- Facilitating broadcast of the meeting.
- Chairing of meetings.

### **Draft Multi- Location Meeting Policy**

The draft Multi Location Meeting policy is attached at Appendix 1 and includes a number of key issues including:

- Determination of meeting types

Physical meetings should not be seen as representing the “gold standard” with multi-location meetings being second best. Physical meetings may be convenient and effective for those most familiar with and comfortable with how they work – but they may also be inaccessible and impractical to many.

#### Predominantly Remote Meetings

Neath Port Talbot Council administers both the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Joint Committee and associated committees. Given the challenges of travelling significant distances across the region and the need to ensure maximum participation, these meetings have been initially identified as “predominantly remote meetings”.

### Predominantly Physical meetings

Experience has identified that some meetings may be better suited to having a higher level of physical attendance. However, this does not preclude some or all participants attending these meetings remotely if they wish or if there are overriding reasons for doing so. These meetings may include the following committees: Special Appointments Committees, Appeals Committee, and Licensing Sub Committee.

### Multi-location Meetings

All Council, Cabinet and committee meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings and ensure that participants are able to attend remotely.

Members of the Democratic Services Committee are asked to note the draft policy and make comments as appropriate.

Members are asked to delegate authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair, to prepare and submit a final version of the Multi Location Meeting Policy to Council for ratification.

### **Financial Impacts**

No impact. The Council facilitated the purchase of hybrid meeting and webcasting equipment to facilitate multi-location meetings.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is in relation to administrative matters only.

### **Workforce Impacts**

No impact.

### **Risk Management**

No impact.

### **Legal Powers**

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Part 3.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2021/1/part/3>

### **Valleys Communities Impacts:**

There are no specific impacts for valley communities arising from this report.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1- Draft Multi Location Meetings Policy

### **Consultation**

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that members:

- Note the provisions of the draft Multi-Location Meetings Policy set out in Appendix A and provide comments as appropriate.
- Delegate authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair, to prepare and submit a final version of the Multi Locations Meeting Policy to Council for ratification.

### **Reason for Proposed Decision**

To approve the Council's draft Multi Location Meeting policy

### **Officer Contacts**

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