

Remote attendance & proxy voting

2 minute read

1.0 Background

1.1 During 2021 and the Covid lockdown, emergency legislation allowed parish councils to hold their public meetings remotely (by video link or telephone conference) and make lawful decisions. This workaround was conditional on residents having the opportunity to take part in those meetings themselves, using their own telephones or laptops.

1.2 This legislation lapsed in May 2021, and although NALC¹ has lobbied since then for new powers to enable remote attendance, no progress has been made since then. However, on Friday 25 October 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government announced a consultation on how it might allow councillors to legally take part in public meetings remotely and if they should be permitted to delegate their voting powers to another councillor.

1.3 This consultation will be promoted across the parish for residents to take part in, but your next public meeting will include an agenda item where councillors can agree a collective response. The public survey closes on 19 December 2024. This Quick Guide explains what is involved.

1.4 Councils may already legally use video technology (such as Zoom or Teams) for private meetings and consultations – this proposal is to allow video public meetings to have the same status as in-real-life public meetings.

2.0 The survey – remote attendance

2.1 The first nine questions ask you about what you think the scope of video meetings could be: would you use them? should there be limits on their use? How often might you use the facility? And the pro's and con's of allowing remote attendance. There is space in the survey form for written comments to be included.

3.0 The survey – proxy voting

3.1 The final three questions ask about your attitude towards 'proxy voting', that is, allowing councillors to delegate their votes to another councillor in their absence. In this proposal, you would be unable to delegate your vote to the Clerk.

3.2 The survey asks if you would find proxy voting 'helpful' and if so, suggests reasons why a councillor may wish to delegate their vote (there is no implication that these reasons would restrict your ability to delegate). Finally, it asks if you think there **should be** restrictions where you would be prevented from delegating your vote and asks for examples.

4.0 Next steps

4.1 Councillors can agree a collective view at their next public meeting and/or take the survey themselves with a personal view. Use this link to take the survey online:

<https://tinyurl.com/ha4jj97u>

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¹ The National Association of Local Councils