



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23**

RESEARCH REPORT

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATIONS**

1. RESEARCH REQUEST

To research the Council's policy in respect of hybrid meetings and the relevant legislation.

2. RESEARCH INFORMATION

Background Information

2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 came into force on the 30th April 2021 and enabled Councils to operate multi-location meetings whereby Members, Officers, the public and Press are able to attend meetings physically or remotely.

2.2 In August 2021, Welsh Government published its Interim Statutory Guidance on Multi Location Meetings, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-08/interim-statutory-guidance-on-multi-location-meetings.pdf>

This was considered by full Council in October 2021 and the report and minutes can be found [here](#).

2.3 The Welsh Government Statutory Guidance stipulates that local democracy and the needs of the public in engaging with multi-location meetings are an important consideration in deciding where and when meetings will be convened. It is also acknowledged that some participants may prefer physical meetings due to protected characteristics or circumstances which limits their ability to participate online. Some participants however may wish to join council meetings remotely and from another location as a matter of default because they have working or caring responsibilities, protected characteristics, which make attending meetings in person difficult.

2.4 The draft statutory guidance confirms that every effort should be made to not disadvantage a member attending remotely, and that their attendance and participation is equal. The Council's statutory Head of Democratic Services has confirmed this approach as part of reports to the Full Council and the Democratic Services Committee, during the roll-out of hybrid meeting arrangements.

2.5 The Council has determined that all meetings will be *offered* to Members as multi-location meeting, to ensure that participants are able to attend remotely or physically should they wish to do so, subject to the Council decision taken on 30th June 2021.

2.6 The Act also requires Local Authorities to webcast certain Council meetings. The main purpose of webcasting is to aid transparency, governance and accountability by giving members of the public, elected members, officers and other interested parties the opportunity to observe meetings without having to attend in person and for the Council to have an official audio and visual record of its decision-making process.

2.7 The following formal meetings of the Council are amongst some of the meetings that will either be *webcast* by being streamed live or recorded for upload to the Council's webcasting website:

- Council
- Cabinet
- Planning & Development Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Governance and Audit Committee
- Democratic Services Committee
- All Scrutiny Committee meetings
- Standards Committee

The virtual Zoom recording will be uploaded to the Council website within a reasonable period of time following the end of the meeting. A record of the virtual recordings can be found here:

[Home - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(public-i.tv\)](https://public-i.tv)
[Virtual Meetings | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://rctcbc.gov.uk)

The Council is still awaiting guidance in respect of which meetings will be mandated as requiring webcasting.

2.8 Webcasting enhances the formal record of the meeting and the decisions taken, which are published on the Council website in the form

of minutes or decision notices. A webcasting protocol is included in [Part 4 Of the Council's Constitution](#)

Attendance/Quorum

2.9 A minimum number of physical attendees will be put in place for Multi-Location Meetings as indicated below.

Meeting	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Cabinet • Planning Committee • Licensing Committee • Appeals Committee • Standards Committee 	<p>All meetings will be <i>offered</i> as hybrid.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Scrutiny Committees • Governance and Audit Committee • Democratic Services Committee 	<p>All meetings will be <i>offered</i> as hybrid. <i>Minimum number of physical attendees – one quarter of the committee</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Education Authority Governors • Voluntary Early Retirement Redundancy Panel • Pension Fund Committee • Executive Committees/ Steering Groups • Joint Committees • Working Groups 	<p>All meetings will be offered as fully remote.</p>

2.10 The quorum of a meeting is one quarter of the voting Members unless specified otherwise within the Council's Constitution. The quorum shall include those attending remotely, at a multi-location or physically.

2.11 The Democratic Services Officer will record the attendance of each committee member and participant at the meeting and record attendance in the Decision Notice/Minutes of the meeting. The attendance will also display within the individual Members' profile on the Council webpages. Committee Members are to inform the relevant Democratic Services Officer if they are unable to attend a meeting and their apologies will be recorded at the meeting and published in the minutes of the meeting.

Confidential Reports

2.11 Agenda items which contain public information, and which are not exempt or confidential can be considered in a public forum. When an exempt or confidential item is itemised on the agenda the following steps may be used to ensure that the information is not shared with anyone other than those entitled to receive it:

- Request that those not entitled to consider the exempt information leave the public remote meeting or be moved to the “virtual” waiting room whilst the exempt information is considered.
- The meeting recording and webcast will be paused for the duration of the exempt item.
- When consideration of the exempt information has been completed, if there are further public items to be considered, all remote participants will be invited to re-join the public remote meeting and the recording and webcast will be resumed. Likewise, the observers or participants attending the physical meeting will be invited to return into the meeting venue.

2.12 The following documents may also be of use in respect of the Council’s Multi-Location Meeting policy:

- Constitution – [Council Constitution | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/council-constitution)
- Privacy Notice - [Recording and Publishing Council, Cabinet and Committee Meetings for Staff and Elected Members | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/privacy-notice)
- Council’s Corporate Privacy Notice – [How we use your personal information - An Overview | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/privacy-notice)

The Council’s multi-location meeting policy will shortly be considered by the Democratic Services Committee.

3. CONCLUSION

It is recognised that Hybrid meetings are a vital component of good democracy in local government and that they help improve the Council's decision-making service. The Council's Multi-Location Meetings policy will be considered by Members of the Democratic Services Committee on the 13th February 2023 and can be found here (it will be published online 7 days in advance of the meeting):

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=165&Year=0&LL=0>

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

SCRUTINY RESEARCH REPORT

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January 2023

**Contact Officer: Sarah Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny
Officer (07385401942)**