



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

13th FEBRUARY 2023

MULTI-LOCATION MEETING POLICY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' comment and approval on the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf Multi-Location Meeting policy (attached at Appendix 1).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members of the Democratic Services Committee:

- 2.1 Review and comment on the Council's Multi-Location Meeting policy (as set out in **Appendix 1**);
- 2.2 Approve the use of the Council's Multi-Location meetings policy (with appropriate amendments as necessary).
- 2.3 Subject to 2.2, the Multi Location Meeting policy be presented to Council for endorsement, following which the Council Constitution be amended to include a copy of the agreed policy.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Members to be aware of the Council's Multi-Location meetings policy and for Members of the Democratic Services Committee to provide comments and observations as appropriate.
- 3.2 For the policy to be shared with all Members of the Council and to adhere to the contents of the policy as a form of good practice when attending multi location meetings.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 provided a framework for Councils to convene remote meetings for all attendees while face to face meetings were unable to take place.
- 4.2 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has enabled Councils to continue to meet remotely with the introduction of multi-location meetings, thereby enabling greater public participation and Councillor involvement in decision making.
- 4.3 During Covid lockdowns and throughout 2020/21 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has been convening its meetings by remote means resulting in a number of benefits such as allowing decisions to be made in a transparent way; Making it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process and making it easier for participants to take part if they have family and/or caring commitments.
- 4.4 When considering arrangements for remote attendance or 'multi-location meetings', Authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: Interim statutory guidance on multi-location meetings <https://gov.wales/local-authority-multi-location-meetings-interim-guidance>
- 4.5 The statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide Authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. The guidance confirms the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.
- 4.6 The statutory guidance also stipulates that Authorities should develop a policy setting out how multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution (Appendix 1 refers).

5. AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 A 'Multi-Location Meeting' is a meeting whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Some of the participants may be physically located in the meeting venue whilst others join from their home or other remote location.
- 5.2 The newly refurbished Council Chamber has multi-location meeting capability, through its webcasting facility, which enables participants to attend both remotely and in person. The Chamber also has a designated public gallery, which allows the public to attend in person. This is in addition to the live public webcasting of some meetings; both providing additional transparency and public oversight in the decision-making process.

- 5.3 The Council has determined that all meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings to ensure that participants are able to attend remotely or physically should they wish to do so, subject to those meetings identified by Council, which Members agreed to take forward as virtual only ([June 2021 Council](#)). (Appendix 1 refers).

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Equality considerations feature throughout the Council's draft multi-location meetings policy.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken as part of refurbishing the Council's Chamber, with the draft multi-location meetings policy now being reviewed by the Democratic Services Committee.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 10.1 Equality considerations feature throughout Corporate and National priorities and specifically the content of this report contributes to a More Equal Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities. Many of the improvements brought about by multi-location meetings, such as innovation around the transaction or meetings, reductions in the use of paper, enhanced public accessibility will serve the objective of making local democratic systems more sustainable.
- 10.2 Multi-location meetings contribute to the Councils Climate Change agenda as the meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings (although digital activity is not carbon-neutral).

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 It is recognised that Multi-Location meetings are a vital component of good democracy in local government and help improve the Council's decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness.
- 11.2 The undertaking of Multi-Location meetings will strengthen accountability and transparency in the democratic process.

11.3 The Multi Location meetings policy will be reviewed as and when appropriate to ensure it remains relevant and 'fit for purpose'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Democratic Services Committee
13th February 2023**

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

APPENDIX 1

Multi – Location Meeting Policy