

Suggested Motion on Remote Attendance Meetings

Background

As part of the Diversity and Inclusion workgroup a questionnaire was issued to Members.

The results showed that time was the most common and consistent issue affected Members' ability to fulfil their roles and was also a reason for people not putting themselves forward. In particular the ability to attend meetings, especially in the evening, was significantly improved if meetings could be attended remotely. In addition, many members travel over 10 miles with a return journey time of 1 hour or more, most often by car. This has a financial, environmental and social impact.

The LGA worked hard last year to influence amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill so that virtual council meetings would be allowed. They said "Unfortunately, we weren't successful and these amendments came out of the Bill. Our position is still that councils should be allowed this flexibility, but we aren't actually working on this issue."

With the advent of enhanced AV in MDCC and other councils remote attendance and voting is more realistic than may have been possible previously.

If the motion is approved we ask that it be sent to Devon County Council and Devon Districts Forum to request their support, and to the LGA for their information.

Motion

A survey of Mid Devon District Councillors has shown that remote attendance at meeting significantly improves inclusion of councillors with caring responsibilities, mobility issues, or greater distances to travel to attend meetings. We ask the DCLG to reconsider the regulations which prevent those participating remotely from voting and permit their full participation in decisions if they have attended the full meeting. As they stand the rules contribute to obstacles facing womens' participation in local government identified by the Fawcett Report ([Does Local Government Work for Women? - Final Report of the Local Government Commission | The Fawcett Society](#)), as well as negatively affecting those with caring responsibilities of whatever gender and those with mobility issues. We ask this council to follow the LGA in lobbying the government to allow councils, if they choose, to enable remote participants to play a full role and vote in decision making.