

Policy and Resources Committee Meeting
Wednesday 16th February 2022

Report from One Voice Wales – Section 47 Multi Location Meetings
for Town and Community Councils

1. PURPOSE

1.1 One Voice Wales (OVW) conducted a survey and the results are intended to assist OVW to fully understand the issues being faced by the sector in order to effectively pursue dialogue with the Minister for Finance and Local Government and civil servants in relation to implementation of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A survey on Section 47 Multi Location Meetings for Community and Town Councils was conducted by One Voice Wales due to several concerns raised by Councils following the introduction of legislation by Welsh Government requiring all Councils holding face to face meetings to have the facility for multi-location meetings with effect from May 2021.
- 2.2 Introduction of legislation by Welsh Government will require all Councils holding face to face meetings to have the facility for multi-location meetings with effect from May 2021. Without this facility, the legislation specifies that Councils should meet only remotely.
- 2.3 A survey was undertaken via an email sent to all 735 Community and Town Councils in Wales on 3 November with a closing date of 26 November 2021. The survey asked a number of factual questions regarding the holding of multi-location meetings in light of the Section 47 Welsh Government Multi Location Meetings regulations passed by the Welsh Government.
- 2.4 Specifically, concerns raised relate to the costs involved in meeting these new requirements, poor broadband reception in certain parts of Wales as well as the practical difficulties involved in ensuring that premises used for meetings can support telephone or video conferencing.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 ATC took part in the survey, responding that we are in a position to offer Hybrid Meetings with the use of the Community Room in the Hub. We are reliant on this being available in future, and that equipment provided in the room by MCC is of good working order and is compatible with ATC's equipment. Contingencies will need to be put in place to be able to keep IT up to date, including licences for relevant parties for specific software packages.
- 3.2 When meeting solely remotely, we encounter issues with councillors having connectivity issues due to broadband capabilities being patchy, or not having access to equipment to allow councillors to fully participate. Additional contingencies may need to be looked in to and invested in to enable all councillors to participate in meetings of this type.
- 3.3 Multi-location meetings can prove a challenge to chair, so training needs to be provided to enable all participants to be able to fully engage in a meeting. Again this is affected by all councillors having access to the same platform used to hold multi-location meetings.
- 3.4 To offer multi-location meetings the Clerk has to be physically present in the building to be able to set up and facilitate this functionality. The Clerk has to have adequate knowledge to be able to problem-solve should any meeting participants need assistance in order to join

the meeting. To enable greater flexibility, training councillors to be able to set up a multi-location meeting will broaden the scope for when and where these meetings could be held.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To accept the report compiled by OVW (Appendix 3).
- 4.2 To assess the current provision, to ensure ATC will continue to be compliant with the implementation of Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.