



The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

10 February 2022

By e mail

Dear Secretary of State,

Local Authority Remote/Hybrid Meetings

We read with interest your recent answer to a parliamentary question from Dr Neil Hudson MP (24 January 2022) in relation to local authority hybrid meetings. We note that you are strongly in sympathy with the view that such meetings should continue to ensure the maximum amount of efficiency. We were encouraged by your recognition of their success in response to Covid and also by your emphasis on the importance of holding on-line meetings for local councils with rural and dispersed populations. We do not disagree with your view that some local authority meetings should continue to meet in person. Full Council meetings for example work best when held physically in Council premises. But it is important for local democracy that councils have that choice and flexibility to suit their own circumstances.

You will be aware of our campaign for the Government to change the law, following the High Court case in 2021 which your predecessor supported. The petition launched by Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) and the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) now has over 10,400 signatures and that number is growing daily. See the link <https://chnq.it/G6v8hgLVbW>. There is therefore a significant amount of support and consensus for on-line meetings.

We have long argued that such meetings should take place within agreed governance rules and guidelines – as indeed they were successfully during the lockdown periods. We have offered previously to work with Government to agree the governance framework within which these meetings should take place. This offer is still very much on the table. Some of our organisations represent the local government practitioners who implement, administer, and oversee the governance processes within Councils and are best placed to advise on the way forward

We are available to discuss this with you at your convenience. Please contact John Austin (ADSO) (john.austin@adso.co.uk) 07793 013616 (m) or Helen McGrath (LLG) (Helen@LLG.org.uk).

More information about our respective organisations is attached.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely




ADSO



LLG



SLCC



CfGS



NALC

More about our organisations

Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO)

Formed in 2009, ADSO is the professional body for Governance and Democratic Services Officers in principal local authorities. We provide professional services, training and qualifications to our members as well as representing them in national and local issues. We also support local authorities in developing best practice in governance and related matters.

Lawyers in Local Government (LLG)

LLG was formed in April 2013 by the merger of the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS) and Solicitors in Local Government (SLG). It's primary purpose is to represent, promote and support the interests of its members.

Membership is open to local government legal or governance officers working within a local authority, including Monitoring Officers and their deputies, solicitors, barristers, legal executives, licenced conveyancers and trainees.

Lawyers in Local Government is a limited company registered in England and Wales. Registered Number: 8379439. Registered Office: Sycamore House, Sutton Quays Business Park, Sutton Weaver, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 3EH.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny (CfGS)

CfGS exists to promote better governance and scrutiny, both in policy and in practice. They support local government, the public, corporate and voluntary sectors in ensuring transparency, accountability and greater involvement in their governance processes. CfGS is a social purpose consultancy and a national centre of expertise. Their purpose is to help organisations achieve their outcomes through improved governance and performance.

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

Established in 1947, the National Association of Local Councils is the national body that represents the interests of 10,000 local (parish and town) councils in England. NALC works in partnership with county associations to support, promote and improve local councils.

Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

Founded in 1972, SLCC represents clerks in over 5,000 parish and town councils in England and Wales.

As the professional body for local council clerks and senior council employees, it ensures that its members are equipped with the necessary knowledge, training and skills to thrive within their role and best support their council and community.