



Association of  
Democratic Services  
Officers

## **Remote Meetings – Government Call for Evidence - 2021**

### **Press Release**

In February, ADSO and LLG submitted a freedom of information request to the Government in relation to the remote meetings 'Call for Evidence' which took place between March to June 2021. We asked for all information received by the Government including a breakdown of the responses received, the number received and the content of the responses, together with any documentation the government holds in respect of the analysis of those responses. We received a response on 8<sup>th</sup> March which refused to provide any of the information we asked for. Extracts from the response are below:

*"The Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities has refused your request for information because it falls within section 14(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Under section 14(1) of FOIA, the Department is not obliged to comply with a request for information if the request is deemed vexatious on grounds of burden.*

*Please be assured that we are using the term 'vexatious' only because this is the word used in the Act. It is not to imply that the Department in any way considers your request to be vexatious in the more traditional, dictionary definition of the word.*

*We believe that releasing this information at this stage serves no particular public interest and is outweighed by the level of burden imposed on the Department in processing your request. The Government does intend to respond to the call for evidence, and when we do, that response will include a summary of the responses received. We are therefore not obliged to consider your request any further."*

We are obviously disappointed with the Government's refusal to be open and transparent in relation to the evidence that they themselves called for. We disagree with the view that it is not in the public interest to provide this information.



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The call for evidence closed nearly two years ago. It is clear that the Government has done absolutely nothing with the 4,370 responses which were submitted in good faith. All those who took the time and trouble to respond deserve better. Had the Government processed the responses in a timely fashion once the Call for Evidence period closed, they would now have the information available for all to see. We have not had a satisfactory explanation for the delay. We will be asking for a review of the Secretary of State's decision to refuse to provide the information we asked for.

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13 March 2023