

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting:	18 June 2014
Title:	Remote Attendance
Author:	Interim Head of Democratic Services

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members will recall that the issue of remote attendance has previously been reported to this Committee.
- 1.2 This issue forms part of the Forward Work Programme for the Executive and Council. A report scheduled for the Executive is attached, setting out the current position and issues concerning remote access. Prior to consideration by the Executive this Committee is requested to comment on the issues raised in the report and make recommendations to the Executive/Council.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 To consider issues detailed in the report and make observations.

Huw Jones
Interim Head of Democratic Services

10 June 2014

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	Executive and Council
Date:	Executive2014 Council2014
Subject:	Remote Attendance
Portfolio Holder(s):	Alwyn Rowlands
Head of Service:	Lynn Ball Head of Function (Council Business) / Monitoring Officer
Report Author: Tel: E-mail:	Awena Parry Solicitor (Corporate Governance) 01248 752563
Local Members:	N/A

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s
<p><u>RECOMMENDATIONS:</u></p> <p>For the Council to :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the Report and the discretion provided in Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011; 2. To reject the use of remote attendance at this stage <u>or</u> to instruct officers to investigate the ICT, staffing and cost implications of implementing remote attendance. <p><u>REASONS:</u></p> <p>Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, and the Remote Attendance Guidance (which has just come into force) enables some elected members of a local authority to attend meetings “remotely”. That is, to attend by an audio visual link, rather than in person. This discretion is not limited to meetings of the full Council.</p> <p>However, implementation means compliance with a number of technical requirements in the Measure. So, a member who is attending by audio visual link must be able to see and hear those speaking in the meeting, and also to be seen and heard by those in the meeting, as well as being seen and heard by any other member who is also attending by audio visual link. Members attending by audio visual link must also be able to see and hear any member of the public who has a right to speak in the meeting so, for example, at the Planning and Orders Committee, or where the public are invited to speak at a Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Members will appreciate that the requirements are more complex than the webcasting pilot, which has now commenced, and that there may be significant technical challenges, as well as additional direct and indirect costs connected to the adoption of remote attendance.</p> <p>Concerns over the technical aspects of implementation include:</p>

- the risk of technology failing part way through a transmission thereby causing interference and interruption to the meeting;
- bandwidth limitations;
- failure by a member to be able to participate in a debate as a result of technical difficulties affecting the validity of decisions taken in the meeting, especially where the voting is close;
- privacy issues (at the remote location) where the item under discussion is exempt (i.e. press and public have been excluded under the Access to Information Regulations).

There are also likely to be staffing implications, as a member of ICT staff may be required to attend at the remote location with the member using the audio visual link, to ensure that the technology is working correctly, and that members are adequately supported. There would be a need to provide training for officers and any members who may wish to use remote attendance; both to familiarise them with the legal aspects but mainly to cover the practical and technical issues involved.

There is also a need to recognise equality as between the Welsh and English languages, so there may be a requirement for advanced translation facilities; and even potentially to have a translator present at a remote attendance site. As part of any decision to implement, the Council would have to decide on a maximum number of members who would be permitted to attend remotely at any given meeting, and to identify the meetings at which remote attendance would be permitted.

As remote attendance is discretionary, members are asked to consider the recommendations above and to instruct officers on how to proceed.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

Both options – to reject the current exercise of this discretion, or to explore it in detail and report back to the Executive/Council, are included within this report.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

It is not an Executive decision.

Implementation would require, among other things, changes to the Council Procedure Rules, and therefore ultimately it is a decision for the Council. However, in the case of constitutional change, the Executive is provided with an opportunity to express its view by way of a recommendation to the Council.

CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Yes

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?
Possibly not, but subject to a comprehensive costing.

DD – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	
4	Human Resources (HR)	
5	Property	
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	
7	Scrutiny	
8	Local Members	
9	Any external bodies / other/s	

E – Risks and any mitigation (if relevant)	
1	Economic
2	Anti-poverty
3	Crime and Disorder
4	Environmental
5	Equalities
6	Outcome Agreements
7	Other

F - Appendices:

FF - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 2. Remote Attendance Guidance