

Appendix Two

EIA MHCLG Consultation

Relevant impact based on the agreed / supported decision highlighted in question 2 : yes to allowing remote attendance, question 3: allowing only in exceptional circumstances, such as those who are medically or physically unable to attend, and question 9: agreement that allowing councillors to attend formal local authority meetings remotely according to their needs particularly benefits individuals with (sic *sharing or not sharing of) protected characteristics (for example those with disabilities or caring responsibilities – it is important to additionally note that ‘caring responsibilities’ is not defined or acknowledged as a protected characteristic as stated within The Equality Act 2010, however this is intrinsically linked with intersectionality in pregnancy and maternity, sex, and across other protected characteristics).

Age: neutral impact

Neutral impact anticipated based on age, in allowing attendance (as defined above) remotely, or when proxy voting. However it is acknowledged that modern working practices, hybrid work and options to attend work / meetings and participation generally is often favoured by younger demographics – currently under-represented at WCC. Allowing such practices at the discretion of the council may allow for a more diverse range of age groups becoming interested in and participating fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

Disability: positive, neutral and negative impact

Positive impact based on disability, in allowing attendance (as defined above) remotely, or when proxy voting. This may be positive for some disabled members, due to being able to utilise equipment comfortably, when mobility, access or other symptomatic conditions relating to disability arise and affect members ability to attend in person events or meetings. Opening the opportunity to attend remotely rather than not attend at all would be a positive element for the decision. It would also allow for enhanced engagement and comfort for some neurodiverse members based on use of equipment supporting reading, accessing documents, accessible and non-visible comfort at individual level, and benefitting those whose adjustments are more suitable to remote attendance (for example those needing to be in close proximity to facilities that support a condition, illness or disability).

It may additionally be negative for those members who are neurodivergent with a condition that means they are impacted negatively in managing or coping with change, such as some autistic people experience. Whilst this will not be the case generally in regards to disability, it is acknowledged that some people adapt to change differently and this may temporarily impact how members engage and attend when meetings are hybrid.

Neutral impact, as not all disabled members will experience the need to access meetings or attend remotely. Being able to offer a remote attendance will attract more diverse members to run for council / cabinet, and participate fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty participate. It would also support in removing barriers they may experience based on their individual accessibility and disability status.

Gender reassignment: neutral impact

No impact anticipated based on gender reassignment, in allowing attendance (as defined above) remotely, or when proxy voting. Allowing such practices at the discretion of the council may allow for a more diverse range of our currently under-represented communities becoming interested in and participating fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

Marriage & civil: neutral impact

No impact anticipated based on marriage and civil partnership status.

Pregnancy & maternity: positive and neutral impact

Positive impact based on pregnancy and maternity (a six month period after giving birth), in allowing attendance (as defined above) remotely, or when proxy voting. This may be positive for some members, due to being able to utilise equipment comfortably, when mobility, access or other symptomatic conditions relating to pregnancy / maternity arise and affect members ability to attend in person events or meetings. Opening the opportunity to attend remotely rather than not attend at all would be a positive element for the decision. It could also benefit those who have given birth and are managing a home environment with one or more young child and baby at home, and benefitting those whose wish to be involved whilst being pregnant or on maternity leave and are more suitable to remote attendance (for example those needing to be in close proximity to facilities that support a pregnancy or post birth symptom or condition).

Neutral impact, as not all members will experience the need to access meetings or attend remotely. Being able to offer a remote attendance will attract more diverse members to run for council / cabinet, and participate fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

Race: neutral impact

Neutral impact, as not all members will experience the need to access meetings or attend remotely. Being able to offer a remote attendance will attract more diverse members to run for council / cabinet, and participate fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

Religion & belief: positive and neutral impact

Positive impact based on religion and belief, or no belief, in allowing attendance (as defined above) remotely, or when proxy voting. Since the times, dates and plans for council and cabinet (and organisationally) are predominantly tailored to a Christian centric calendar of events, this will be positive for those who have a religion, belief, or have no religion or belief, in enabling them to attend meetings when they ordinarily may not be available due to faith based celebrations, activity or worship. Remote attendance would allow those observing religious festivities or dates, the option to still participate fully without the detriment of having to potentially travel during these times.

Neutral impact, as not all members will experience the need to access meetings or attend remotely. Being able to offer a remote attendance will attract more diverse members to run for council / cabinet, and participate fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

Sex: positive and neutral impact

Positive impact based on sex, considering the statistics and given the acknowledgement that women (with children, and who responsible for childcare or caring responsibilities) provide significantly more childcare duties and 'home based' labour according to numerous surveys and ONS census data across Worcestershire, therefore benefiting this group based on sex as identified, allowing attendance (as defined above) remotely, or when proxy voting.

Neutral impact, as not all members will experience the need to access meetings or attend remotely. Having the ability and opportunity to attend remotely will enhance women's ability to contribute and represent the county equitably and without a detriment of care provision for families. This will not mean that a negative impact for men is felt, rather it must also be noted that this impact is not solely beneficial for women based on the characteristic of sex, and that childcare and family care is a factor across all sexes. Being able to offer a remote attendance will attract more diverse members to run for council / cabinet, and participate fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

Sexual orientation: neutral impact

Neutral impact, as not all members will experience the need to access meetings or attend remotely. Being able to offer a remote attendance will attract more diverse members to run for council / cabinet, and participate fully in public life and council based decisions, thus enhancing our compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.