

Member Survey Results – Remote Meetings

A survey was sent to all Members on Friday 29 January 2021 and was open for a week, closing on Friday 5 February 2021. Each question had a mandatory multiple-choice option and the option to leave further comments. This breakdown shows the results of each question followed by the comments left for that question. 34 Members completed the survey.

Question 1: How would you rate your experience of attending remote committee meetings?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
9	19	6	0	0
26%	56%	18%	0%	0%

Comments:

- “Training for some members who seem to have struggled through some meetings.”
- “Now that people are have gained experience in basic functions i feel that further training could be offered with screen sharing and multiple screens and more intricate functions.”
- “I find Microsoft teams a very useable alternative to conduct meetings!”
- “I think it is important that we try to avoid consecutive meetings without gaps.”
- “Send out the reports/briefings and a reminder invite on the day of the meeting so we are not scrolling through hundreds of emails looking for it”
- “My experience improved when I gained access to a second screen so that I could see documents, the chat and the meeting.
If members were encouraged to keep camera on, it would be more like a meeting where people were present.
The experience of chairing a meeting is much harder remotely, because its hard to just have that quiet word with an officer / legal officer. The officer private chat helps, and some people are great at just turning on their camera when they have a contribution.
Remote meetings can take a lot longer - especially when votes are required. Zoom has a voting function.
Remote meetings of the full Council have been the least satisfactory. Its perfectly possible to attend large meetings, but ones where everyone has to participate / vote become very cumbersome. and lengthy.”
- “Bandwidth issues.”
- “I think we need to introduce a mandatory gap between meetings.
Not having head space between meetings because they are back to back can be a hindrance mom.”

- “Well prepared, good back up for technical difficulties.”
- “Sometimes my home wifi quality dips and people can't hear me. The Council provide BT wifi at my home.”
- “Ok for transactional business, but not really appropriate for more contentious issues, appear to be rather 'overstaffed' - at least two committee clerks and legal officer.”
- “Being able to ascertain the order in which 'hands' were raised. When meetings are 'accepted' the e mail with the'link' disappears? A reminder with the link the day before would be useful.”
- “Receive any additional materials about motions etc at least 24 hours in advance, so time to read and prepare. Receive all reports at least 48 hours before meetings to prepare.”
- “Getting relevant papers to members on time. It's OK for ctees, but sometimes tardy for briefings and working groups.”

Question 2: Do you feel that IT officer support for remote meetings has been?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
19	12	3	0	0
55%	35%	10%	0	0

Comments:

- “Further training as above.”
- “Very difficult as not on site.”
- “To be fair, I've not particularly needed any support so its not informed by experience!”
- “They are as good as can be expected with the tech.”
- “Staff have been excellent in supporting members.”
- “Some IT support is excellent. I spent a lot of time on two 'dongles' that I did not request and have not worked.”
- “Had to use own device on occasion as a back-up.”
- “There is a difference between the 'public' webcast meetings and our 'internal meetings'. The use of 'Question Please" and 'Comment Please' has helped. The use of chat needs to be developed to indicate '@Motion please' or 'Amendment please'.”

Question 3: Do you feel that remote meetings allow the same level of debate and discourse as meetings held in person?

Very Much	Yes	Not sure	No	Not at all
4	15	5	10	0

12%	44%	15%	29%	0%
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Comments:

- “Only when chair doesn't stop you in mid flow.”
- “Nothing wrong with the structure but connectivity and loss of signal can effect quality of the meeting.”
- “There are pros and cons. Member behaviour is better at remote meetings and they are much more time efficient.”
- “In some meetings, particularly licencing panels, when we are interviewing members of the public, it is imperative that we see and well as hear them. (Some are on a phone with voice only)”
- “members talk over each other, nuanced debate is not always possible, hard to read the virtual room and body language.”
- “There are too many meetings and they take too long.”
- “Remote meetings are maybe a bit less free flowing, but the chair can permit the debate in the same way. It can be more difficult because body language is missing!”
- “There is a lost level of nuance.”
- “The remote meetings have been well structured.”
- “There are often people in private and public online meetings - I don't know who they are and they are not introduced. This creates an odd dynamic and probably missed opportunities to add value.”
- “Those meetings that deal with transactional business are fine but the more contentious issues are difficult to deal with. You cannot 'read the room' - a lot of communication is non-verbal, unable to view all committee members at once so miss incredibly important non-verbal cues.”
- “Zoom appears to allow more opportunity to be seen throughout than Teams. It is difficult to judge the mood of the meeting.”
- “Ppt [PowerPoint] presentations best sent in advance of any workshops or meetings, then focus can be on shorter overview and Q&A.”
- “Time of meetings needs to be reduced to 1.5 or 2 hours as far too long on TEAMS.”
- “I think it does instil a little discipline into the proceedings.”
- “It would be helpful if etiquette for commenting and asking questions were stated at the start of each meeting, as this can vary depending on who is involved and how many people.”

Question 4: On the whole, do you feel that you have been able to participate fully in remote meetings and express your views and opinions?

Yes	Mostly	Not sure	No
23	11	0	0

68%	32%	0%	0%
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Comments:

- “The hand raise function is not always visible to the chairperson.”
- “I find a PDF format for meeting papers really useful as I can view them whilst meetings are live.”
- “Sometimes (and I've experienced this once when in the Chair) Teams does not properly display the hands raised, missing people out. I had seen it happen to other people, but only when it happened to me did I realise how difficult it makes the whole process. It made the meeting less efficient by far.”
- “This depends partly on the chair, but I have felt able to participate fully in discussion in all the meetings I have taken part in.”
- “It’s not only my views and opinions that matter. Body language and facial expression has been removed. Participation by the public is much more difficult.”
- “But very dependent on the Chair and the quality of legal support and advice that they are given.”
- “The odd occasion have lost connection.”

Question 5: Do you believe that the meeting protocols used for remote Committee meetings (i.e. asking attendees to keep their cameras and microphones off until asked to speak, use of the “virtual lobby” for members of the public, roll-calls at the start of meetings and use of roll-calls for votes etc) have worked well?

Very Much	Yes Mostly	Not sure	Not Really	Not at all
14	16	1	2	1
41%	47%	3%	6%	3%

Comments:

- “It was stated that a dress protocol was expected but this seems to have diminished.”
- “It was stated that a dress protocol was expected but this seems to have diminished.”
- “We need to be very clear with members of the public as to how they can exercise their rights to participate.”
- “I agree with microphones off as there is often background distractions. I think Video off only assists if that member is having bandwidth issues, which generally shouldn't affect others. That would then members only need to concentrate on turning the mike on when participating.
The roll calls work well and I think sometimes are legally required.”

- “Keep them to 2 hours maximum.”
- “Wirral is the only organisation I'm aware of where it is expected to switch camera's off.”
- “There should be a clear protocol at all meetings, to stop some individuals coming in to speak, without specific invitation from the Chair. Also, anyone invited to speak should be asked to put their camera on. Often, individuals choose to speak, with no camera on. There should be a clear protocol for members requesting permission to speak. Do they type it in the chat box, put the "hand" up, or some other method? All members should be asked to log in to the meeting a few minutes before starting time. Meetings should start on time, rather than wasting time, waiting for some people to log in. All members should be asked to keep their mike switched off, when not speaking, to ensure meetings are not interrupted by barking dogs, phones going off etc.”

Question 6: Do you have all the equipment necessary to continue comfortably with remote meetings?

Yes	No
28	6
82%	18%

Comments:

- “An additional monitor would be handy.”
- “I have all of the above and they have all helped.”
- “Please see my comments about PDF papers.”
- “I don't really want an additional monitor as I have some myself. However it would be good to have the connectivity so that I could connect when necessary myself from the surface pro to a larger screen.”
- “I've been able to use my own monitor and headset thanks. Internet is good.”
- “A Mini DisplayPort to hdmi adapter cable to connect my surface pro to an additional screen. I have an additional screen so no need for the screen just the cable.”
- “Additional monitor please. IT support for the dongle or a working alternative.”
- “Sound quality good but surface pro screen is rather small to work from.”
- “4G WiFi dongle.”

Question 7: Please let us know if you have any further comments you would like to make regarding remote meetings:

- “In general it has worked well but improvements could be added.”
- “I very much hope these will continue in future, especially for meetings with less than 20 people. They save time and energy and avoid a lot of

unnecessary expense. Council staff have done great work to assist with remote meetings for which I am grateful.”

- “I think remote meetings are a safe alternative to F2F meetings and remain essential till such time as "Normal Meetings" can be resumed. My thanks to all the IT staff and officers for their continued support.”
- “Less of them and shorter agendas.”
- “They have some limitations, but they have generally worked adequately to keep democratic debate and decision-making. Reducing unnecessary travel to Wallasey Town Hall and cutting our collective carbon footprint has to be a bonus. With increased familiarity, virtually all members have adapted to the new systems and my perception is that discussion and debate is more courteous and considered.”
- “Remote meetings fit in with eco agenda - less fuel and building fuel used. More people are able to access from home with equipment.”
- “There used to be a lot of valuable business done before and after face-to-face meetings, including on urgent or sensitive matters. Currently the space before meetings formally start is often occupied by banter of minority interest, and the meetings end abruptly. Perhaps there is another way to create those valuable opportunities, such as break out rooms?”
- “Total failure for full Council meetings, long, laborious and just doesn't work for those meetings. It is difficult at Committee meetings but it does seem to work well for all-party briefings and agenda settings etc. I think remote meetings are best for imparting information but face to face meetings are required for those meetings where discussion and debate is necessary. Seems to be a plethora of staff attending meetings - are they really required?”
- “The budget meeting or meetings will test the system to the limit!”
- “Chairs need to manage meetings to time as Members are currently being expected to go over time too often.”
- “I much prefer on-line meetings.”
- “Meetings have been generally more concentrated on the subject matter rather than the usual waffle which takes place in face-to-face meetings. Decisions have been taken more quickly. I much prefer online meetings and the time saved travelling to meetings has also been a bonus.”
- “I wouldn't like to think all future meetings would continue online. I think committee and full council meetings should return to the/a town hall, but briefings and working groups could mainly be held online.”