



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020**

DATE **30 June 2020**

BY **Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government**

I have today laid in the Senedd, the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the Amendment Regulations”) which amend the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020, which came into force on 22 April 2020 (“the April 2020 Regulations”).

Link below:

<https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/sub-ld13268/sub-ld13268%20-e.pdf>

The April 2020 Regulations make temporary provision to provide flexibility for local authorities (including local authority executives) to meet safely, effectively and lawfully during the Covid-19 pandemic. The April 2020 Regulations enable local authority meetings to be conducted on the basis of full or partial remote attendance for participants, while retaining the principles of openness and accountability by requiring the electronic publication of documents related to a meeting.

For the most part, the amending provisions address minor and technical matters which relate to the April 2020 Regulations. They include provision, for example, to ensure that the notice to be given ahead of meetings to consider certain reports under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and provisions relating to the minutes of meetings of standards committees are consistent with the arrangements introduced by the April 2020 Regulations.

The April 2020 Regulations provide flexibility for local authorities to hold meetings which (by virtue of an enactment or other instrument) are required to be held before 1 May 2021 (other than certain annual meetings) on such day and time before 1 May 2021 as the authorities may determine. However, there are a small number of meetings which are required by statute to be held within a specified period after certain reports are sent to authorities (or to members, as the case may be). On reflection, I have concluded that because the subject matter of such meetings is so grave, it is not in the public interest for the flexibility provided by the April 2020 Regulations to apply to the meetings required to be held under the

provisions listed in regulation 2 of the Amendment Regulations.

It is vitally important that the institutions of local democracy continue to function during this period and elected members and local people have the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge decisions taken by local authorities. Allowing time for members and officers to become acquainted with new equipment and new procedures, I am pleased to see that many local authorities all over Wales have started meeting again.

The response to the April 2020 Regulations was positive and I and my officials have had requests from various quarters to make many of the changes permanent. I will consider such changes very carefully before making final decisions, both in terms of the effect on the conduct of local authority business and the impacts on accessibility.

In the meantime, I urge those local authorities which have been more cautious to take advantage of the new flexibilities and get back to business as soon as possible. I will continue to monitor progress and developments.