

# **Bath and North East Somerset Council**

## **Full Council meeting 25 March 2021**

### **Liberal Democrat Motion on Virtual and Hybrid Meetings**

**To be proposed by Councillor Jess David**

Council notes:

1. B&NES Council meetings have been held virtually since Spring 2020 as permitted by the Coronavirus Regulations 2020, under which virtual meetings have the same status and validity as in-person meetings.
2. These regulations will expire on 7 May 2021.
3. The LGA and B&NES Group Leaders, as well as many Councils across the UK, and national professional bodies, have called for virtual meetings to be made a permanent option for Councils.

Council believes:

4. There are many benefits to virtual and hybrid meetings for participants, observers and the general public, including: improved access and safety, reduced emissions from transport, savings on time and expenses, and better engagement with residents.
5. Councillors, officers and the public have made great progress in developing the technological skills to participate in virtual meetings on various platforms.
6. Longer term, the option of holding virtual and hybrid meetings could attract a more diverse range of Councillors and officers.
7. Councils should be able to choose between a virtual, hybrid or in-person format for Council meetings, depending on factors such as participants or weather conditions.

Council therefore:

8. Calls on the Government to bring forward legislation enabling virtual and hybrid meetings to be a permanent option for Councils, alongside in-person meetings.
9. Requests that the Leader write to relevant Ministers and local MPs on this matter.
10. Calls on all Councillors to raise this issue with colleagues such as Parish Councillors.

- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
- *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*