



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Elin Jones AM
Presiding Officer
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

21 April 2020

Dear Elin,

The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020

In accordance with section 11A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1946, as inserted by Sch.10 para 3 of the Government of Wales Act 2006, I am notifying you that this Statutory Instrument has come into force less than 21 days from the date of laying. The Explanatory Memorandum that accompanies the Regulations is attached for your information.

The Regulations make temporary provision for the conduct of local authority meetings and for public and press access to these meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purposes of these regulations the term local authority includes principal and community councils, an executive of a principal council, a port health authority, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. It also includes committees, sub-committees and joint committees of two or more of these bodies.

The measures employed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic include social distancing, the avoidance of non-essential travel and the requirement to work from home where possible. Legislation currently places requirements on local authorities to meet in person in specified offices, to make many meetings open to the public and to enable the public to inspect documents related to the meetings, in some cases, in the offices of authorities. This runs counter to the measures in place for COVID-19.

The Regulations will enable local authorities to operate safely, effectively and lawfully, while retaining the principles of openness and accountability to the public.

The Regulations seek to achieve this by, for example, enabling authorities to conduct meetings on the basis of remote attendance, modifying existing requirements for local

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

authorities to hold annual meetings and other meetings at specified times in 2020, and removing the requirement that meetings must be held in public. The Regulations also make provision for various documents to be published electronically, including public notices of meetings and agendas, summons to be sent to members electronically, and provision relating to the inspection of minutes following meetings.

The Regulations are required to come into force on 22 April 2020 to enable local authorities to continue to function. Local authorities are not able to make these changes by amendments to their own standing orders or other local rules as requirements for meetings are generally set out in detail in primary and secondary legislation. Without the changes set out in the Regulations, local authorities are unable to hold any meetings safely. This is preventing them from their vital efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These arrangements will remain in place for meetings held before 1st May 2021.

In view of the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, not adhering to the 21-day convention is thought necessary and justifiable in this case.

Due to the immediacy of the Regulations, it has not been subject to consultation, however, the Welsh Government has been in regular contact with the UK Government and with bodies representing local government in Wales.

As referred to above, an Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared and this has been laid, together with the Regulations, in Table Office.

A copy of this letter goes to Mick Antoniw AM, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee Sian Wilkins, Head of Chamber and Committee Services and Julian Luke, Head of Policy and Legislation Committee Service.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Evans AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd