



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

OPEN CONSULTATION, DOCUMENT

Consultation on extending the duty on local authorities to broadcast meetings

We want your views on whether the duty to broadcast meetings should be extended.

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Overview

Section 46(1) and (2)(a) of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the 2021 Act”) places a duty on principal councils (county councils and county borough councils) to put in place arrangements for the broadcasting of full council meetings so that members of the public who are unable to attend in person at the meeting can see and hear proceedings as they happen.

Section 46(2)(b) and (4) of the 2021 Act gives Welsh Ministers the power to require a principal council to broadcast other meetings it holds.

Section 46(8) and (9) of the 2021 Act gives Welsh Ministers the power to require fire and rescue authorities (“FRAs”) and National Park authorities (“NPAs”) to broadcast their meetings.

This consultation is to consider:

- whether the duty on a principal council to broadcast meetings should be extended to include meetings other than that of the full council
- whether there should be a duty imposed upon FRAs and/or NPAs to broadcast their meetings
- whether there should be a retention period for recordings of broadcast meetings

Context

The 2021 Act provides principal councils (meaning county councils and county borough councils), FRAs and NPAs with new ways to support and serve their communities with a strong emphasis on the principles of democracy, transparency, and accountability to the citizens of Wales. The 2021 Act contains a number of provisions which create greater transparency and openness between principal councils, FRAs, NPAs and communities.

Welsh Ministers are keen to maximum the potential of digital technology to achieve greater transparency, collaboration, and accountability between principal councils and the citizens of Wales. However, Welsh Ministers also recognise that it is important not to disenfranchise individuals who do not have access to, or are unable to engage with, digital technology.

Background

Meetings of principal councils, FRAs and NPAs have the potential to reach and engage a wide audience from the local community and further afield. There is potential at these meetings to share information, and for discussions to take place as well as increasing awareness of local issues with those in attendance. They can also be an ongoing means of engaging public involvement in local issues.

Section 46(1) and (2)(a) of the 2021 Act requires a principal council to make arrangements for its full council meetings to be broadcast electronically so that members of the public who are not in physical attendance at the meeting can see and hear the proceedings. This is sometimes referred to as the 'broadcasting duty'. Under section 46(1), proceedings must be broadcast as they take place, subject to any specified exceptions and the broadcast must be available electronically for a specified period after the meeting.

Section 47(1) of the 2021 Act also requires principal councils to make arrangements for their meetings to be held remotely. This is sometimes referred to as 'multi-location meetings duty'.

Whilst these are 2 separate duties, they have both provided the public with greater opportunities to access discussions about the issues principal councils deal with, and what factors they consider when making decisions which impact on people's daily lives.

Currently, there are no similar duties in legislation requiring FRAs or NPAs to broadcast their meetings, but they are required to hold multi-location meetings.

Principal councils

Current position

The original intention was for all principal council meetings to be broadcast live, not just the full council meeting. However, principal councils raised concerns about their capacity to comply with this requirement and the infrastructure needed to support this approach. The suggestion of a more staged implementation was accepted, and consequently principal councils are, at present, only required to broadcast meetings of their full council. There is currently no legal requirement to broadcast any other meeting held by a principal council.

It was agreed the experience of broadcasting full council meetings would inform the approach to the future expansion of broadcasting requirements, to other meetings of principal councils.

At present it is a matter for principal councils to decide the approach they take in terms of whether to broadcast any meetings in addition to the full council meeting. Should a principal council wish to broadcast some or all of its other meetings, then it can do so, as many do in practice. The existing provisions do not limit the number, or type of meetings principal councils are able to broadcast live on a voluntary basis.

Support to facilitate multi location meetings and broadcasting

To assist with the implementation of sections 46 and 47 of the 2021 Act, and to respond to some of the concerns raised by local government, Welsh Ministers provided more than £850,000 to principal councils to support the implementation of multi-location meetings and broadcasting enabling a variety of platforms and approaches to be taken based upon the circumstances of each principal council.

The broadcasting arrangements are now well established in principal councils,

which has enabled a greater opportunity for wider access to their full council meetings by local communities and Welsh citizens.

The Welsh Government has undertaken an analysis of principal council compliance with the broadcasting duty under section 46(1) and (2)(a) of the 2021 Act. The analysis showed that all principal councils are broadcasting their full council meetings live, and retaining a copy of the recording online, for members of the public to access.

Many have gone beyond the mandatory requirements of the 2021 Act and are broadcasting live or providing an online recording of other meetings. These include meetings of Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Planning Committees.

The Welsh Ministers are currently considering how the agreed staged approach to expansion of the mandatory requirements to broadcast meetings might be taken forward.

Welsh Government has engaged with representatives of principal councils and discussions have focussed on a number of issues including:

- Whether expansion of mandatory broadcasting to other principal council meetings is required.
- What type of meetings should any expansion include?
- How long should recordings of meetings be retained?

Technology continues to advance

Digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI) approaches, such as Copilot, can significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities in Wales when organising and broadcasting multi-location meetings. By leveraging AI-powered tools, authorities can streamline the scheduling process, ensuring that all participants are available and that meetings are set up with the necessary resources. AI can also assist in real-time transcription and translation.

In addition, AI can enhance the broadcasting of these meetings by providing

automated camera control, ensuring the focus is always on the active speaker. This creates a more engaging and professional viewing experience for remote attendees. AI can also help in archiving and indexing meeting recordings, making it easier to retrieve and review past discussions. This not only improves transparency but also aids in better decision-making by providing easy access to historical data. Overall, digital and AI solutions like Copilot can transform the way local authorities in Wales conduct and broadcast their meetings, making them more efficient, inclusive, and transparent.

It is, of course a matter for local authorities across Wales to determine how they embrace and exploit this technology to maximise the potential benefits.

Extension of mandatory broadcasting for principal councils

Discussions with principal councils about extending the range of meetings to be broadcast in the future has provided a mixed response. There is recognition that broadcasting has resulted in greater openness and transparency, but as costs rise, concerns have been raised that an expansion of live broadcasts will have resource implications for principal councils. These costs include (but are not limited to):

- increased resources to support digital platforms and management of meetings
- cost of storing videos as well as official papers and minutes of meetings (video storage is more expensive as it takes up more space)
- translation costs for live streaming
- adaptation of meeting rooms

Whilst Welsh Ministers recognise there are resource implications associated with expanding the number of meetings required to be broadcast live, it is also the case that this can be minimised through careful planning of the timing of meetings. Welsh Ministers consider a pragmatic approach which focusses on broadcasting a number of committee meetings which have broader public interest, would be a proportionate next step in the approach.

Welsh Ministers consider it important that individuals across Wales should be provided with similar levels of accessibility to the democratic process regardless of where they live and this is generally more easily, or in some cases, only achievable using digital technology to broadcast meetings.

Discussions with principal councils suggest an appropriate next step would be to extend the requirement to broadcast meetings live to include most of the statutory committees which principal councils are required to hold, together with meetings of the Cabinet.

Much of local government business in Wales is conducted through committees established by principal councils. Legislation provides that a principal council must establish a committee for certain statutory functions and may establish committees for other functions, to discharge its statutory duties.

As the decisions taken by these committees influence and affect the lives of citizens and communities across Wales, it is important that individuals are able to understand what issues their local representatives are considering on their behalf, and how they are taking into account their views and interests.

Rationale for change

There is an outstanding commitment to consider how the duty to broadcast meetings should be extended to include other meetings of principal councils. This is in line with the iterative approach agreed with local government.

Increasing the range of meetings to be broadcast could provide the public with greater knowledge of how principal councils carry out their functions; how the views of the public are being considered; and how decisions are made.

Welsh Ministers' proposal is to require the meetings of the following principal council statutory committees to be broadcast: Democratic Services, Governance and Audit, Licensing, Planning, Overview and Scrutiny, and Standards Committees, plus Cabinet meetings.

These additional meetings cover the main statutory functions of a principal

council. The Welsh Government would welcome views on whether there is an appetite to change current broadcasting arrangements and if so, what specific changes would you like to see to the current arrangements?

There is no proposal at this time to extend the duty to cover sub committees and joint committees of a principal council because of the demands on resources of local authorities and the agreed iterative approach to expansion.

Principal councils will need to consider how these additional meetings will be managed and how members of the public can continue to access meetings in order to maintain clear, transparent and accessible meetings.

The statutory committees of a principal council

Democratic Services Committee

A Democratic Services Committee is a statutory committee of a principal council established under section 11(1) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. Its purpose is to appoint a Head of Democratic Services; review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions and to make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision. It also reviews, at the request of Full Council, any matter relevant to the support and advice available to Members of the council and the terms and conditions of office of those Members and must make reports and recommendations to the council following such a review.

Governance and Audit Committee

A Governance and Audit Committee is a statutory committee of a principal council established under section 81 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. It has functions set out in law which it must carry out, which include reviewing and scrutinising the council's financial affairs and financial statements; reviewing and assessing the council's risk management; performance

assessment; and the council's ability to handle complaints effectively; and overseeing the council's internal and external audit arrangements. It can make reports and recommendations about all of the things it is tasked with reviewing and assessing. Councils can also ask these committees to undertake other suitable functions.

Licensing Committee

A Licensing Committee is a statutory committee of a licensing authority (principal council), established under section 6 of the Licensing Act 2003. It determines all matters regulated by the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005. It is responsible for considering and proposing the authority's licensing policy. It can make decisions about individual licence applications submitted to a council, revoke existing licences, or add conditions to licences through hearings and policies of the council. Cases considered by the committee include applications for taxi licences, for temporary events such as fetes and fairgrounds and for permission to sell alcohol and sex establishment licences.

Planning Committee

A Planning Committee is a statutory committee of a principal council, established under section 319ZA of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It decides whether **planning applications** (https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Planning_application) should be **approved** (<https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Approved>) or rejected and whether approved applications should have **planning conditions** (https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Planning_conditions) or **planning obligations** (https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Planning_obligations) attached to them. The proposals it considers can be development ideas for the benefit of the local economy and community and are usually large, complex, or controversial and can sometimes attract significant public interest.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee (sometimes known as a Scrutiny Committee) is a statutory committee of a principal council established under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000. Its purpose is to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive; and to review or scrutinise decisions made, or action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive. Scrutiny is an important part of a council's own systems for improving its performance as it holds the executive to account for the decisions it makes. Scrutiny Committees can publish reports and recommendations for improvement which should be considered by the executive and responded to as well as making reports or recommendations on matters which affect the principal council's area or the inhabitants of that area.

Standards Committee

A Standards Committee is a statutory committee of a relevant authority (which includes principal councils) established under section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000. Its purpose is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and the co-opted members of a relevant principal council; and to assist them to observe the code of conduct. Its role has specific functions in law, which is to advise the principal council on the adoption or revision of a code of conduct; monitor the operation of the principal council's code of conduct; to advise and train members and co-opted members of the principal council on matters relating to its code of conduct; to monitor compliance by leaders of political groups on the council with their duties to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group and advising and training leaders of political groups on the council about matters relating to these duties.

Cabinet meetings

The Cabinet, otherwise known as 'the Executive', of a principal council is established under section 11 of the Local Government Act 2000. It is made up of a number of councillors chosen by the elected Leader to work together to undertake decisions which are outlined in law. For example, it is responsible for setting the budget, policy making in its principal council area and for taking many of the major decisions on the way a Council serves its residents. Each Cabinet member has a specific responsibility, known as a portfolio, covering areas such as health and social care, transport, education and leisure and recreation.

Exemptions

As with all committees and meetings, there will be items that require closed sessions where public attendance is not allowed. Councils will not be expected to broadcast aspects of their meetings which are normally held in private, for example, principal councils would not be required to broadcast proceedings of a standards committee where confidential matters are being discussed. It is proposed that these items can be accommodated through procedural rules about proceedings.

Extension of broadcasting requirement to NPAs and FRAs

Background

There are currently 3 NPAs in Wales: Bannau Brecheiniog, Pembrokeshire Coast and Eryri. In its Programme for Government (2021 to 2026), the Welsh Government sets out its intention to designate a new National Park in Wales based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONB (Now known as a 'National Landscape'). If established, it would be the fourth NPA in Wales.

There are currently 3 FRAs in Wales, North Wales fire and rescue authority, Mid and West Wales fire and rescue authority and South Wales fire and rescue authority.

Section 46(8) and (9) of the 2021 Act allows Welsh Ministers to require specified bodies to broadcast their meetings, including NPAs and FRAs.

Due to the large geographical areas covered by each NPA and FRA it can be difficult for people to attend their meetings and as a result their meetings are often held either fully online or on a hybrid basis. Welsh Ministers are keen to explore views about extending the requirement to broadcast meetings to FRAs and NPAs in Wales.

Current position

NPAs

NPAs oversee the protection and conservation of the areas within the park authority area and have the following 2 purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the Park) by the public.

In undertaking this role NPAs may do anything which, in their opinion, may facilitate or is conducive to the accomplishment of the park purposes. They also have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social prosperity of local communities within their area but must do so without incurring significant additional expenditure.

Each NPA consists of members appointed to serve on the authority by principal councils that have land within the park boundary. They make up two-thirds of the membership of an authority. The remaining members are appointed by the Welsh Government.

Each NPA in Wales is currently able to decide whether to broadcast its meetings on a voluntary basis. Full authority meetings are currently broadcast live by all of the NPAs at their discretion. Following the meeting a recording is available online. Specific arrangements about the retention of recordings of meetings are set by each NPA, currently all NPAs make recordings available online for a minimum of 6 months.

FRAs

FRAs have statutory obligations to oversee the provision of fire and rescue services in their areas. The powers and duties of fire and rescue authorities are set out in Part 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Their core functions are:

- promoting fire safety
- firefighting
- responding to road traffic accidents
- dealing with other prescribed emergencies

FRAs serve areas which are combinations of local authority areas and consist of nominated elected members representing those authorities. A full FRA meeting takes place 3 to 4 times a year and typically covers a range of strategic, operational and resourcing matters.

As with NPAs, each FRA in Wales is currently able to decide whether to broadcast its meetings on a voluntary basis. There is currently no standard approach by FRAs to broadcasting their meetings. Full authority meetings are broadcast live by FRAs at their discretion with a recording made available online. Specific arrangements about the retention of recordings of meetings are set by each FRA.

Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires NPAs and FRAs to establish a standards committee. These committees play a crucial role in promoting high standards of conduct among members. Currently there is no duty to broadcast these meetings

Extension of mandatory broadcasting duty

Both FRAs and NPAs are part of the local government family in Wales and are responsible for overseeing vital public services in which there is wider public interest. FRAs work to prevent fires, respond swiftly to emergencies, and contribute to a decline in incidents. Meanwhile, NPAs protect Wales' natural beauty, offer recreational opportunities, and engage communities in shaping policies. Both directly impact safety, quality of life, and the environment.

Welsh Ministers consider that, as with principal councils, there is merit in the public being able to follow the proceedings of the FRAs and NPAs, that is the full meetings and standards committees, either as they happen, or for those unable to do so, to have access to recordings of the meetings. Welsh Ministers therefore consider there is benefit in ensuring individuals and organisations in Wales have the same level of access to these proceedings regardless of where they live.

As with the proposals for meetings of principal councils, NPAs and FRAs will not be expected to broadcast aspects of their meetings which are normally held in private e.g the proceedings of a standards committee where confidential matters are being discussed. It is proposed that these items can be accommodated through procedural rules about proceedings.

Rationale for change

As with principal councils the rationale for change is to open up democracy to a wider audience and improve transparency.

Retention periods

Section 100C(1A) and (1B) of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") requires principal councils to have minutes open for inspection for 6 years.

Some minutes may be subject to different retention periods, such as those which

are relevant to ongoing legal proceedings or investigations; those which hold exceptional historical value or those of local significance to archival institutions.

Whilst written minutes are required to be kept to provide an official record of the meeting, it is recognised that they may not preserve the full detail of events in the same way as a recording of the meeting itself does.

The 2021 Act states that in relation to the broadcast of full meetings of principal councils, the recording of the broadcast must be available electronically for a specified period after the meeting. The term 'specified period' has not been defined in law and as such is open to each principal council to determine. As a result, practices differ across Wales.

An NPA and FRA is a 'principal council' for the purposes of section 100C of the 1972 Act and so are subject to the requirement to keep minutes for 6 years.

As there is no current requirement in legislation for FRAs or NPAs to broadcast their meetings, there is no requirement in legislation to make these available electronically after the meeting.

Welsh Ministers are interested in views about the period of retention for the recording of broadcast meetings for principal councils, FRAs and NPAs and whether this should be the same and as is currently in place for written records (minutes) of meeting i.e 6 years, or for a different period of time.

Next steps

In considering proposed changes to the arrangements for broadcasting council meetings in this consultation, it is important to consider that any changes improve local democracy and informed decision making.

This consultation seeks views about:

- What meetings of principal councils other than full council meetings should be broadcast in the future?
- Whether broadcasting provision should be extended to include meetings of

FRAs and NPAs?

- The retention period for recordings of broadcast meetings.

Consultation questions

Question 1

Do you agree the duty to broadcast meetings live should be extended to additional meetings of a principal council?

Question 2

Are there other committees' meetings of a principal council you think the duty should be extended?

Question 3

Do you agree the requirement to broadcast meetings should be extended to NPAs and FRAs?

Question 4

Should the broadcasting of NPA and FRA meetings be extended to meetings beyond that of the full authority, e.g standards committees?

Question 5

In relation to principal councils, NPAs and FRAs, do you agree that recordings of meetings required to be broadcast should be retained?

Question 6

What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of extending the duty to broadcast meetings on the Welsh language?

We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?

Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

Question 7

In your opinion, could extending the duty to broadcast meetings be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Question 8

Please explain how you think broadcasting of council meetings impacts different social, economic and cultural groups, both positively and negatively and what measures can be undertaken to ensure equitable access and representation.

Question 9

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

How to respond

Submit your comments by 28 November 2025, in any of the following ways:

- complete our **online form** (<https://www.gov.wales/node/67799/respond-online>)
- download, complete our **response form** (<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2025-06/wg49993-response-form.docx>) and email **LGPolicy.Correspondence@gov.wales** (<mailto:LGPolicy.Correspondence@gov.wales>)
- download, complete our **response form** (<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2025-06/wg49993-response-form.docx>) and post to:

Local Government Policy Division
Welsh Government
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Additional information

The closing date for this consultation has been extended to 28 November 2025 to allow more time for responses following the summer period.

Your rights

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please **tell us** (<https://www.gov.wales/extending-duty-local-authorities-broadcast-meetings>).

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer

Data Protection Officer
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

E-mail: [**data.protectionofficer@gov.wales**](mailto:data.protectionofficer@gov.wales)
(<mailto:data.protectionofficer@gov.wales>)

Information Commissioner's Office

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

Website: [**ico.org.uk**](https://ico.org.uk) (<https://ico.org.uk/>)

UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for Welsh Government consultations and for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation.

Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. The lawful basis for processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task; that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government. (Art 6(1)(e))

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. In the case of joint consultations this may also include other public authorities. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation and that the Welsh Government may be under a legal obligation to disclose some information.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response, then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by

Welsh Government will be kept for no more than 3 years.

Further information and related documents

Number: WG49993

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