

The Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP  
Leader of the House of Commons  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

Date: 09/12/2021

Dear Mr Rees-Mogg

### **Request to enable councils to hold hybrid meetings**

The provision for council meetings to be held remotely expired on 6 May. It was explained to us that there was no time to bring in primary legislation to allow remote meetings to continue extend the provisions due to pressures on Parliamentary business. Officials in DLUHC have told us recently that this is still the case. We note that various emergency regulations are to be tabled in Parliament in the coming days.

We are writing now to seek a renewed provision, whether temporary or permanent. Councillors would like to meet in person as the norm but would also like the flexibility to enable the democratic decision-making process to continue. In particular, we draw your attention to the following:

- Local Covid infection rates are the highest they have been.
- Councillors are having to isolate through illness or contact with others who have tested positive.
- Guildford BC held a meeting this week and received apologies from 38% of our councillors.
- Surrey County Council has cancelled its meeting next week "in light of the Covid-19 situation", as have some others around the country.
- Arranging for a larger venue to allow for safety measures has cost Waverley BC £16,715 since May 2021.

We have the facilities to conduct hybrid meetings and would like to do so to enable full participation and to reduce the risk of delays to democratic decision-making.

We would respectfully request your officials to work urgently with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to enable councils to keep democracy running most effectively and to table emergency legislation this week if necessary.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Joss Bigmore  
Leader, Guildford Borough Council



Cllr Paul Follows  
Leader, Waverley Borough Council

Cc: Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Michael Gove MP; Sir Paul Beresford MP; The Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP; Jonathan Lord MP; Angela Richardson MP.