



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

DATE **22 April 2020**

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

The current health outbreak is impacting all our lives and is presenting and will continue to present a number of challenges to the way we are able to operate during this period.

The work of local authorities is essential in supporting individuals, businesses and communities at this extraordinary time. The scale and nature of the challenges being experienced on a daily basis is unprecedented, but the efforts of local authorities working collaboratively with other sectors across Wales to combat this pandemic is inspiring and truly humbling.

The measures employed to combat COVID-19 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 local authorities. This runs counter to the measures in place for COVID-19.

It is important that where government is able to take steps to reduce barriers to business continuity and avoid unnecessary distraction that we do so.

I have, and continue to be in regular contact with Local Authority Leaders to identify steps that can be taken to support our local government family. Through these and ongoing discussions between my officials and representatives for Community Councils, National Parks Authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities and the Swansea Bay Port Health Authority, a number of areas where the relaxation of some requirements in legislation would help those bodies to continue to carry out their important functions have been identified.

The regulations which come into effect today make temporary provision in relation to local authority meetings and for public and press access to these meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. I do not expect local authority meetings to return to normal for some months and

therefore Councils will need to be flexible to provide for urgent business relating to COVID-19.

They provide flexibility to enable local authorities to operate safely, effectively and lawfully, while retaining the principles of openness and accountability to the public. This includes enabling meetings to be conducted on the basis of full or partial remote attendance and by making provision about the electronic publishing of certain documents.

These regulations apply to principal councils and their executives, community councils, Swansea Bay Port Health Authority, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities across Wales.

[The regulations can be found here](#)

It is important to recognise the contribution of representatives of all these organisations during the development of these regulations which has concentrated on maintaining their focus on delivering services to individuals at local, regional and national level.