

**Minutes of the meeting of Desborough Town Council  
held in the library and streamed online by Zoom on Thursday 20 May 2021**

Councillors present: L Burnham (Outgoing Chair: item 1./21 only), A Coleman, J French, J Gardiner, T Healy, J Read (Outgoing Vice-Chair: item 1./21 only), S Roberts, P Sawford, A Window, and H Wood

Also present: G Thomson (Town Clerk), and four members of the community (in the library) and 24 members of the community by Zoom.

Immediately prior to the meeting the Chair thanked the Council for her time as Chair, wished the new Council well, and urged Councillors to keep it local for the town.

**1./21 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE 2021/22 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

Having been moved and seconded it was

**RESOLVED that:-**

**Councillor Sawford be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year.**

**2./21 CHAIR'S WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair expressed thanks to Mesdames Burnham and Read for their work as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, especially the even-handed, diligent approach. He also thanked Councillors for their support in his return to the Chairmanship after 37 years. He undertook to work for the whole community.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the comments be noted.**

**3./21 TO CONSIDER AND IF SO DECIDED TO APPOINT A VICE CHAIR FOR THE 2021/22 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

Having been moved and seconded it was

**RESOLVED that:-**

**Councillor Wood be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year.**

**4./21 TO RESOLVE THAT THE ACCEPTANCES OF OFFICE FROM THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR BE DELIVERED TO THE PROPER OFFICER BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL AND TO NOTE THE RECEIPT OF COUNCILLORS' ACCEPTANCES OF OFFICE**

The Town Clerk reported that all newly elected Councillors had delivered their acceptances of office.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- i) **the acceptances of office from the Chair and Vice-Chair be delivered to the Proper Officer before the commencement of the next meeting of the Council; and**
- ii) **the receipt of all Councillors' acceptances of office be noted.**

**5./21 TO CONSIDER AND IF SO RESOLVED TO APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Town Clerk reported that no apologies for absence had been received.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information be noted.**

**6./21 TO NOTE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM COUNCILLORS**

No declarations of interest were made.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information be noted.**

**7./21 TO NOTE OR CONSIDER ANY REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*To note any requests for dispensation for Councillors with an interest to be allowed to speak which have been considered by the Town Clerk in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Scheme of Delegation, and to consider any such applications not yet determined.*

The Town Clerk reported that no requests had been received.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information be noted.**

**8./21 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2021**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*The minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2021 have been circulated.*

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chair.**

**9./21 TO HEAR REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*Note: no decisions can be made in response to matters raised under this item.*

A member of the public spoke about the planning application relating to “Desborough North (land at), Desborough” application [NK/2021/0356](#). He referred to matters in the application to which he and others objected including: the proposed use of Rowan Close as a road access to the development; the removal of the previously proposed buffer between the proposed development and the existing housing; and the provision of amenities.

A member of the public spoke about the planning application relating to “Desborough (land to south of), Rothwell Road, Sycamore Drive, Desborough” application [NK/2021/0372](#). He referred to his and others’ objections to the proposals and outlined the activity of the protest group.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the comments be noted.**

**10./21 TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL ON THE PROPOSALS FOR THE LAWRENCE’S SITE.**

The Chair welcomed Ms Hunt, the North Northamptonshire Council’s Development Manager (Kettering Area), Mr Conway the North Northamptonshire Council’s Head of Housing, and North Northamptonshire Council’s Councillor Rowley.

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*Members will be well aware of the proposals for the former factory site. The Head of Housing for North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) has been invited to attend the meeting (by Zoom) to explain the current proposals and hopefully to commit to some form of meaningful local consultation before the formal submission of planning applications.*

*The Council is REQUESTED to consider any response to the presentation.*

The Head of Housing introduced the slide presentation and explained that the former Kettering Borough Council had approved a plan for the site comprising social housing. He explained that it was yet to be submitted for planning approval and he sought views on the proposals. Development Manager explained the NNC was seeking feedback on the proposals, that the original intention had been to demolish and build new but that it had subsequently been decided to retain and repurpose the existing buildings.

Questions were asked in relation to parking provision, access routes, any changes to New Street, and the absence of any measures to regenerate the Town Centre.

The Head of Housing noted that there was a need for housing of the kind proposed. In response to questions, she undertook to investigate the possibility of giving priority to Desborough residents in the allocations policy for the development.

The Chair suggested that whilst it would be unfortunate to delay the investment in Desborough, the opportunity was being missed for a retail or mixed use solution. In response to comments about the absence of meaningful public consultation the Head of Housing undertook to carry out further public consultation, at which other ideas could be put forward, subject to fixing dates and locations and being Covid-secure.

The Chair thanked the NNC representatives for their attendance and contributions, acknowledged the work undertaken in getting the proposal this far, but urged NNC to do what was right for Desborough, and requested that the dates and locations of the consultations.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the presentation be noted and the details of the further consultation be publicised in due course.**

## 11./21 **TO CONSIDER FILLING ANY OR ALL OF THE FOUR VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL BY CO-OPTION**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*Following the election, the Council has four vacant seats for Loatland Ward. Normally, any casual vacancy has to be offered to the electors in the ward to requisition a by-election, and if no election is requested then the Council may co-opt. However, following whole Council elections the Representation of the People Act 1985 says the Council should first consider co-options within a period of 35 days.*

*In accordance with the Council's "Casual Vacancies and Co-Options Policy and Procedure" the vacancies were advertised and the closing date set as 9am on Monday 17 May 2021. Self-nominations received before the closing date will be verified and details of qualified candidates will be published.*

*The Town Clerk will provide guidance on the voting procedure based on the number of applicants, and the number of Councillors present in the room. The Council will follow the procedure in the "Casual Vacancies and Co-Options Policy and Procedure" and will vote by show of hands. The Council will hear from the candidates (in alphabetical order) for up to four minutes each, and will proceed immediately to vote. There will be no discussion with candidates, or between Councillors on this matter. The inability of any applicant to attend the meeting (in person or online) cannot be held against them, their words can be read (if submitted in time) and they will still be part of the voting process.*

*The Council is not obliged to co-opt any candidate and may reject any or all candidates without giving reasons. In order to be considered, an applicant must have their candidacy moved and seconded.*

*To be co-opted a candidate needs to secure more than half of the votes available at the meeting. If the Council does not vote to co-opt four candidates then the process may be repeated before the expiry of the period allowed by Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 and referred to in the Council's Policy to fill any remaining vacancy. Candidates not co-opted may put themselves forward again.*

*The Council is REQUESTED to consider the applicants and vote on co-opting up to four as a Councillors.*

It was noted that the seven people present who had put themselves forward for consideration for co-option were: L Burnham, D Cornwall, G Harbour, R Hill, D Larmour, B Murphy-Ryan, and J Read. In accordance with the Council's policy each candidate read their statement in support of their candidacy. All applicants having received a mover and seconder for their candidacy, a vote was held.

The Chair thanked all candidates for their keen interest and congratulated those who had been successful.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the following candidates be co-opted: L Burnham, D Cornwall, D Larmour, and B Murphy-Ryan.**

## 12./21 **TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE PLANNING AND LICENSING REPORT**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*The Council is REQUESTED to consider making comment on any planning or licensing matter set out in the report attached at Appendix B.*

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information contained in the report be noted.**

## 12.1./21 **[NK/2021/0356](#) DESBOROUGH NORTH (LAND AT), DESBOROUGH**

In response to questions, the Town Clerk confirmed that the Planning Authority had confirmed the the Town Council's response could be submitted after the closing date for public consultation.

Concern was expressed in relation to several aspects of the application including: the proposed road accesses to the development; traffic; road safety; design and design standards; the provision of amenities; public facilities; the late submission of documents; and the absence of some documents.

NNC Councillor Howes stated that he was seeking an emergency meeting with planners in relation to the application and he expressed his view that the access proposals were totally unsuitable.

Following a full discussion it was

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the Town Clerk be authorised to submit the Council's objection to the proposals in accordance with the views expressed.**

12.2./21

**NK/2021/0372 DESBOROUGH (LAND TO SOUTH OF), ROTHWELL ROAD, SYCAMORE DRIVE, DESBOROUGH**

Concern was expressed in relation to several aspects of the application including: the proposed road accesses to the development; there should be no through traffic; road safety; design and design standards; the impact on mental well-being; the impact on flora and fauna; flood risks; and the absence of up to date documents, especially the ecological survey;

Following a full discussion it was

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the Town Clerk be authorised to submit the Council's objection to the proposals in accordance with the views expressed.**

13./21

**TO NOTE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING AND CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*As Members will be aware, the recent decision in the case of (1) Hertfordshire CC (2) LLG (3) ADSO & Sec of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government ('the virtual meetings case') makes it clear that until the existing primary legislation is changed certain Council meetings from 7 May 2021 onwards can no longer be held (solely) remotely. An 'addendum' to this judgment makes it clear that the general public must also be allowed some opportunity to attend in person.*

*Luke Hall MP (Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government) has stated that "while you do have a legal obligation to ensure that the members of the public can access most of your meetings, I would encourage you to continue to provide remote access to minimise the need for the public to attend meetings physically until at least 21 June, at which point it is anticipated that all restrictions on indoor gatherings will have been lifted in line with the Roadmap. However, it is for individual local authorities to satisfy themselves that they have met the requirements for public access."*

*The current COVID-19 Guidance for the safe use of council buildings states as follows:*

*"Local authorities have legal obligations to ensure that members of the public have access to most of their meetings. For physical meetings, the government would actively encourage local authorities to continue to provide remote access until at least 21 June, at which point it is anticipated that all restrictions on indoor gatherings will have been lifted in line with the Roadmap. However, it is for individual local authorities to satisfy themselves that they have met the requirements for public access."*

*The recent judgment made it clear that there needs to be some provision for members of the public to attend in person, however the judgment also makes it clear that the legal obligations would be met if remote access is provided in addition. Furthermore, there are of course good health and safety reasons for continuing to provide remote access of some degree.*

*From 18 May onwards we are under the step 3 of the Roadmap and all meetings before 21 June are subject to two further requirements:*

- that the meeting organiser has carried out a risk assessment that would satisfy the requirements of regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.*
- that the meeting organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of coronavirus, taking into account:*
  - (a) the risk assessment carried out; and*
  - (b) any guidance issued by the government which is relevant to the meeting.*

*The Government has updated the health and safety advice in response to the virtual meetings case: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings>*

*From 21 June (at the earliest), as the legislation currently stands, the rules regarding social contact will cease to apply, and all meetings can continue without limitations on numbers, risk assessment requirements etc.*

*The June Council meeting is scheduled to take place on 17 June 2021 and therefore unless the meeting date is changed the arrangements for the June meeting will echo the May meeting.*

*The 'Roadmap' referred to by Luke Hall MP is a reference to the Government's '[COVID-19 Response – Spring](#)'. Paragraph 115 states as follows: 'People should continue to work from*

home where they can, minimise domestic travel where they can': this is relevant to the current position on the 'roadmap' and is 'underpinned by law' (The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021).

It is the duty of every employer to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees (s2(1), HSWA 1974). There is no legal obligation for the Town Clerk to be at any meeting themselves in person. The quorum for a meeting is at least one-third of the whole number of Members of the Council or at least three members where one-third of members is less than three).

Why has this situation occurred? The legal decision has helped nobody, however this situation it is not the fault of the Judiciary. The Government has said that there was insufficient time to introduce primary legislation for this change, however 7 May 2021 has been a date on the horizon since both The Coronavirus Act 2020 itself and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into effect (25 March 2020 and 4 April 2020 respectively). Clearly therefore this situation was entirely avoidable. This is a situation that can only be resolved through legislation and therefore it is logical for the Council to consider raising concerns with the Member of Parliament.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to:

- i) consider making representations to the local MP;
- ii) consider whether the meeting scheduled for 17 June should:
  - 1) be postponed or cancelled;
  - 2) proceed with similar hybrid arrangements; or,
  - 3) proceed "in person" only.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- i) the Town Clerk be requested to make appropriate representations to the MP; and,
- ii) the meeting scheduled for 17 June 2021 proceed with hybrid arrangements similar to the May meeting.

14./21

**TO CONSIDER A RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY REMOTE MEETINGS: CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

Partly in response to the campaigns around the continuation of remote access to meetings, and the Court process, the Government is calling for evidence relating to Council's experiences regarding remote meetings. The consultation portal is here: <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-stewardship/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence/>

The experience of remote meetings has been varied across the country, and while the experience of managing and participating in remote meetings has grown considerably during the period since the remote meetings regulations came into force, there have been examples of the difficulties this format has posed for some authorities. Equally there have been tangible benefits and in some cases cash savings. The Government is particularly interested to receive any quantitative data that can be included to substantiate responses made.

The questions in the consultation are set out in Appendix A. The closing date for responses to the consultation is 17 June 2021.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to consider any response to the consultation.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**Councillors French and Sawford give draft responses to the Town Clerk to reply on behalf of the Council.**

15./21

15.1./21

**TO RECEIVE AN ORAL UPDATE ON PROJECTS PROPOSED ONE-WAY SYSTEM AND PARKING RESTRICTIONS GLADSTONE STREET / NICHOLS STREET**

The Town Clerk reported that the drawings for the scheme had been received immediately before the meeting and on an initial view appeared to be not quite as requested. He explained that he would revert to the engineers for clarification.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information contained in the report be noted.**

**15.2./21 BRAYBROOKE ROAD PLAY AREA**

The Town Clerk reported that the contract between the NNC and Sutcliffe Play (the preferred contractor) had been signed and a start date was expected soon. He confirmed that the monitoring was undertaken securely entirely within the public sector.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information contained in the report be noted.**

**15.3./21 CCTV INSTALLATION AND UPGRADE**

The Town Clerk reported that the contractor would be starting work imminently.

**RESOLVED that:-**

**the information contained in the report be noted.**

**16./21 TO CONSIDER THE APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*As Members may know, appointments and nominations to “outside bodies” terminate at the statutory annual meeting of the Council, or until the Council decides otherwise (whichever is sooner). There is no right for any organisation to have Councillor or Council appointed representatives, and only rarely does a Council have a right to make appointments (this is usually for charities as a foundation Trustee).*

<b>Name of body</b>	<b>Note</b>
Rothwell North Working Party	Previously Cllrs Burnham and James
Desborough Pocket Park Committee	The Council no longer holds the lease for the park.

*The Council is REQUESTED to consider appointing representatives.*

**RESOLVED that:-**

**consideration of the matter be deferred until the next meeting.**

**17./21 TO CONSIDER AND IF SO RESOLVED TO APPOINT TO COMMITTEES, ADVISORY PANELS, AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-

*As Members will know, positions of responsibility, the membership of internal bodies, and internal and external appointments terminate at the statutory annual meeting of the Council (except financial account signatories), or when the Council otherwise decides. Before any Committee, Sub-Committee, or other body is formed it is a requirement that terms of reference are prepared (the terms of reference for existing bodies are on the Council’s website, and hyperlinked).*

<b>Name of body</b>	<b>Note</b>
Financial account signatories (continue until removed or replaced)	Must not be independent review Councillors. Three Councillors plus RFO preferred.
Independent review Councillors	Must not be account signatories. Minimum of one.
<a href="#">Personnel Committee</a>	Councillors only
Data Protection Officer	Currently Northants County Association of Local Councils as addition to membership
Volunteer Path Warden	
Volunteer Road Safety Warden	
Volunteer CCTV Warden	
Armed Forces Champion	To promote support for the Armed Forces community
<a href="#">Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee</a>	3 Councillors; 1 voting non-Councillor member of the community resident in the town; 1 voting non-Councillor member of the business community in the town.
<a href="#">Awards Advisory Panel</a> (Honoured Citizen Awards)	Three Councillors and Three non-Councillors
<a href="#">Community Grant Advisory Panel</a>	Four Councillors and Four non-Councillors

*The Council is RECOMMENDED to consider the matter and to make appointments as deemed appropriate.*

**RESOLVED that:-**

- i) **Councillors Gardiner, Sawford, and Window, and Mr G Thomson (as Responsible Financial Officer) be appointed as the Council’s only bank signatories; and,**
- ii) **consideration of the remaining items be deferred until the next meeting.**

- 18./21 TO NOTE INFORMATION RELATING TO TRAFFIC MOVEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE ROTHWELL NORTH HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND ALLIED ISSUES**  
 Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-  
*The Council has been informed about vehicle movements into and out of the construction site and violations of the approved routes by heavy vehicles.*  
*The most recent information is:-*  
 03/05 - 09/05 14 violations inwards and 2 violations outwards out of 877 vehicles  
 This represents a violation rate of 1.82% but includes delivery vehicles for property occupiers and the refuse collection vehicle. Excluding those would reduce the violation rate to 1.48%  
*The developer has indicated that it is making a request for improved temporary signage on the network to really try and make it crystal clear to the large vehicles arriving and leaving site the route to follow.*  
*In response to the Council's questions relating to the disbursement across the two towns of the receipts of fines, the developer has confirmed that the fine details will be worked out at the end of the monitoring period.*  
*The developer has also confirmed that progress is being made towards a start date of the A6 roundabout. A contractor has been appointed and it is hoped to have traffic management out on the A6 the first day of the school summer holidays.*  
*The Council is REQUESTED to note the report.*  
**RESOLVED that:-**  
**the information contained in the report be noted.**
- 19./21 TO RECEIVE REPORTS ON ACTIVITY FROM NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCILLORS, LOCAL GROUPS, AND VOLUNTEERS**  
 Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-  
*Any reports received will be circulated to Councillors.*  
*The Council is REQUESTED to note any reports submitted.*  
 The Town Clerk stated that the report from NNC Cllr Dearing had been circulated. NNC Cllr Howes reported that he had begun training and expected to be able to provide information about the new Council soon.  
**RESOLVED that:-**  
**the information be noted.**
- 20./21 TO NOTE THE DATA FROM THE TVAS SPEED SIGNS**  
 Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-  
*Data from the speed indicator signs has been posted on the Council's website.*  
 The Council is REQUESTED to note the report.  
**RESOLVED that:-**  
**the information be noted.**
- 21./21 TO RECEIVE THE FINANCE REPORT**  
 Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-  
*The Council is RECOMMENDED to approve the report (Appendix C).*  
**RESOLVED that:-**  
**the report be approved.**
- 22./21 TO NOTE THAT THE COUNCIL DOES NOT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**  
 Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-  
*From this meeting, the Council no longer meets all the requirements to retain the general power of competence. This determination is made at the annual meeting following the ordinary election and at any point when the requirements are met. The impact of the determination is that expenditure may be made only if the Council has a specific power to do so. It is anticipated that the matter will be able to be reviewed in the coming months. It is RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.*  
**RESOLVED that:-**  
**the information be noted.**
- 23./21 TO CONSIDER AND IF SO RESOLVED TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**  
 Extracted from the report of the Town Clerk:-  
*The report set out at Appendix D details those invoices and payments for payment, those authorised in accordance with the scheme of delegation, and those where payment is by*

*continuous authority; and the Council is RECOMMENDED to approve payments. Details in the report may be updated before the meeting as information is received.*

**RESOLVED that:-  
the payments listed in the report be approved.**

**The meeting closed at 21:21**

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**Desborough Town Council**  
**20 May 2021****Planning and Licensing Matters**

Click the underlined text to go to details of the application on the Planning Portal of North Northamptonshire Council (link is outside the Town Council's control).

[NK/2021/0263](#)

21 Langdale, Desborough  
Single storey side extension and entrance porch

[NK/2021/0272](#)

13 Wilton Close, Desborough  
Two storey side and single storey rear extension

[NK/2021/0306](#)

The Hermitage, Desborough Road, Brampton Ash  
Redevelop eastern half of business park to provide new employment units (Class E -formerly B1)

[NK/2021/0321](#)

Gaultney Farm (land at), Pipewell Road, Desborough  
All details in respect of KET/2018/0623 for residential development of up to 70 dwellings

[NK/2021/0330](#)

52 Church View Road, Desborough  
Change of Use from dwelling house to residential care home for one child

[NK/2021/0338](#)

Eckland Lodge Business Park, Desborough Road, Braybrooke  
Variation of condition 3 of KET/2018/0655 in respect of temporary change of use of Unit A2 from industrial/warehouse to gymnasium

[NK/2021/0355](#)

Greenway, Pipewell Road, Desborough  
Single storey rear extension

[NK/2021/0356](#)

Desborough North (land at), Desborough  
All details in respect of KET/2017/0169 for residential development of 700 dwellings

[NK/2021/0363](#)

5 Oakwood Close, Desborough  
Outbuilding/grill cabin

[NK/2021/0372](#)

Desborough (land to south of), Rothwell Road, Sycamore Drive, Desborough  
All details in respect of KET/2016/0044 for up to 304 dwellings

[NK/2021/0373](#)

20 Oak Tree Close, Desborough  
Single storey extension to extend beyond the rear wall of original property by 3.60m with a maximum height of 3.06m and eaves height of 3.06m

[NK/2021/0374](#)

Desborough Library, High Street, Desborough  
Single storey rear extension

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**Desborough Town Council**  
**20 May 2021**

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**Questions**

The government would like to gather evidence about the use of the arrangements that make express provision for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid format during the coronavirus pandemic, including the arrangements that existed for Scottish Authorities prior to the pandemic.

Q1. Generally speaking, how well do you feel the current remote meetings arrangements work?  
Very Well      Well      Neither well nor poorly      Poorly      Very Poorly      Unsure

While the powers in section 78 of the Coronavirus Act were brought in specifically to help local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland deal with the challenges of holding meetings during the coronavirus pandemic, the government would also like to hear from interested parties about the pros and cons of making permanent express provision, in whole or in part, for local authorities in England.

Q2. Generally speaking, do you think local authorities in England should have the express ability to hold at least some meetings remotely on a permanent basis?

Yes      No      Unsure

Beyond having express provision to avoid face-to-face meetings during the coronavirus pandemic, we are aware of feedback from local authorities about additional benefits of being able to hold remote meetings including, but not limited to, the environmental and cost benefits of reduced travel, increased participation from local residents, and the potential to attract more diverse local authority members. We are keen to obtain representative views on the benefits of remote meetings and would particularly welcome any quantitative evidence to support these views.

Q3. What do you think are some of the benefits of the remote meetings arrangements? Please select all that apply.

- More accessible for local authority members
- Reduction in travel time for councillors
- Meetings more easily accessed by local residents
- Greater transparency for local authority meetings
- Documents (e.g. minutes, agendas, supporting papers) are more accessible to local residents and others online
- Easier to chair meetings in an orderly fashion
- A virtual format promotes greater equality in speaking time during meetings
- I do not think there are any benefits to remote meetings
- Other (please specify)

Q4. Have you seen a reduction in costs since implementing remote meetings in your authority?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Some local authorities have also made reference to the difficulty that some members have had with the remote meeting format, particularly in relation to the difficulties in managing misconduct, the challenges of working with unfamiliar software, and technological issues caused by a poor internet connection. We are keen to obtain representative views on the disadvantages of remote meetings and would particularly welcome any quantitative evidence to support these views.

Q5. What do you think are some of the disadvantages of the remote meetings arrangements, and do you have any suggestions for how they could be mitigated/overcome? Please select all that apply.

- It is harder for members to talk to one another informally
- Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who have a poor-quality internet connection
- Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who are unfamiliar with video conferencing/technology
- There is less opportunity for local residents to speak or ask questions

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- Some find it more difficult to read documents online than in a physical format
  - Debate is restricted by the remote format
  - It is more difficult to provide effective opposition or scrutiny in a remote format
  - It is more difficult to chair meetings in an orderly fashion
  - Virtual meetings can be more easily dominated by individual speakers
  - It might enable democratically elected members to live and perform their duties outside their local area on a permanent basis, therefore detaching them from the communities they serve
  - It may create too substantial a division between the way national democracy (e.g. in the House of Commons) and local democracy is conducted
  - I do not think there are any disadvantages to remote meetings
  - Other (please specify)

The government considers that there are also many advantages of holding meetings face-to-face. For example, physical meetings provide numerous opportunities for local authority members to speak with one another informally and build alliances, as well as to encounter local residents in the flesh and listen to their concerns in person.

Additionally, some members have referenced the vast improvement in the quality of debate when there is a lively atmosphere and they are able to make full use of their oratory skills to persuade and influence others. Some may consider remote meetings stifling and that physical meetings are essential to effective democracy and scrutiny.

Q6. What do you think are some of the main advantages of holding face-to-face meetings, as opposed to remote meetings?

If express provision for remote meetings were made permanent, it might be preferable for the government to constrain the meetings or circumstances in which remote meetings can be held to ensure that effective democracy and scrutiny can still take place.

There are some occasions, for example, where a remote meeting format may be seen as more appropriate, such as for smaller sub-committees, meetings convened at short notice, or for meetings where attendees are drawn from a large geographical area i.e. for some joint committees, combined authorities and large rural authorities. On the other hand, there are occasions where a remote meeting format may be viewed as less appropriate, for example larger meetings involving Full Council or an authority's Annual Meeting.

Q7. If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, for which meetings do you think they should have the option to hold remote meetings?

- For all meetings
- For most meetings with a few exceptions (please specify)
- Only for some meetings (please specify)
- I think local should be able to decide for themselves which meetings they should have the option to meet remotely
- I do not think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings for any meetings
- Unsure

Q8. If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, in which circumstances do you think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings?

- In any circumstances
- Only in extenuating circumstances where a meeting cannot be held face-to-face or some members would be unable to attend (e.g. severe weather events, coronavirus restrictions)
- I think local authorities should be able to decide for themselves which circumstances they should have the option to meet remotely
- I do not think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings under any circumstances
- Other (please specify)
- Unsure

While local authorities have risen magnificently to the challenge of ensuring vital council business continues by conducting meetings remotely during these unprecedented times, there may be concerns that, if the

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arrangements were to made permanent, a situation could arise where remote meetings arrangements were used by a ruling party to avoid effective scrutiny or abuse the power in some other way.

Q9. Would you have any concerns if local authorities in England were given the power to decide for themselves which meetings, and in what circumstances, they have the option to hold remote meetings?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q10. If yes, do you have any suggestions for how your concerns could be mitigated/overcome?

In deciding whether and how remote meetings arrangements may be made permanent for local authorities in England, the government needs to ensure that it has due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. In particular, the government would need to avoid unlawfully discriminating (either directly or indirectly) against individuals with a protected characteristic, and also consider whether the arrangements advance equality of opportunity or help to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Many local authorities have spoken of the potential benefits that remote meetings could have for members or potential members with disabilities or young families. However, there are also those for whom remote meetings could pose additional difficulties, for example those with hearing or visual impairments or those more likely to struggle with the technology.

We are keen to consider views on these aspects of remote meetings and would particularly welcome any quantitative evidence to support views provided.

Q11. In your view, would making express provision for English local authorities to meet remotely particularly benefit or disadvantage any individuals with protected characteristics e.g. those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?

- Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
-

## Appendix C

**Desborough Town Council**  
**20 May 2021**
**Finance Report**  
**Monthly Bank Reconciliation (30/04/2021)**

Unity Trust Bank Current	£37,750.23
Unity Trust Bank Saver	£100.00
Barclays Current	£1.00
Barclays Business Saver	£9.45
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	£275,478.37
Reconciled Balance	£313,339.05

The dividend from the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund is reinvested each month into the fund. In April the dividend reinvested was £13.80. The first half year payment of the precept was received in the sum of £36,893.00

## Appendix D

**Desborough Town Council**  
**20 May 2021**
**Accounts for payment**

Items may be added or adjusted as information is received.

+ Paid in accordance with delegated or continuous authority

	Supplier	Description	Reason	VAT	Total Amount
+	Desborough Library and Community Hub	Town Council Office	Office Rent	£0.00	£666.67
+	Harlequin Print Supplies	General office & sundry expenses	Tonor	£0.00	£239.93
+	LGSS Pensions, and Mr G Thomson	Salaries & all Employment Costs	Pension and salary payments (May)	£0.00	£2,971.73
+	Mr G Thomson	Town Council Office	Refund of expenses (telephone)	£0.00	£10.00
+	Talk Talk Business	Town Council Office	Internet and telephone	£5.39	£32.34

## Report No 1

**Desborough Town Council**  
**20 May 2021**
**North Northamptonshire Council report**

It's been a busy couple of weeks since the election. Firstly, along with Cllr. Howes and Cllr. Tebbutt I attended the "Protect the Ise Valley" meeting. We listened to the concerns of the people and went through where the application stood in the process and what could now be done. There are limited options available however we will work with the public to get the most we can from this development.

Secondly we have been dealing with the latest submission to open up "Rowan Close" on the Grange to give access to phase 2. This we object to and are waiting for confirmation of a meeting with senior managers. We will keep the Town Council up to date on this as it moves forward.

Lastly I have been in contact with the Council housing officers with regards to some tenant issues that have arisen. I have asked for a meeting to understand the housing policy on evicting tenants and re housing them.

Cllr. Mark Dearing  
 Desborough Division