

	Summary of Feedback	Comments (if any)
1.	I would be in favour of a combination of online/telephone/in person community council meetings as a means of equality of access for all. I would access meetings online whereas have difficulty attending in person.	Noted.
2.	I think the concept of remote meetings or a hybrid version is a great idea. Would there be training for process and technical issues.	Training has previously been provided for community councils seeking to move to online meetings during the pandemic. It is anticipated that further sessions could be held where there is a requirement.
3.	I personally would rather have zoom in the winter. The number of deer/wildlife on the road was quite interesting and they do sometimes jump in front of cars. Remote meetings would provide opportunity for less travel from different areas within the vast area covered. This may promote intake of councillors from those areas who do not have easy access to the 'main' meeting venue. Zoom also has a role in helping widen the age demographic of those attending and increases the overall numbers. Interest by younger people has increased. Community councils deal with community concerns and it is therefore important to have easy access to meetings.	Agreed.
4.	Supports the proposals. The reasons being, it future proofs Community Council meetings, it reduces travel for Local Councillors covering a large distance and it does not exclude those who do not have internet access. Protocols will need to be put in place to ensure those who join online are able to engage in the meeting as easily as if in person.	Agreed. There is no need for anyone to be excluded due to not having access to a computer as most meeting forums will allow anyone with a telephone to participate.
5.	Please adopt the practice of using both remote and in person meetings. This would permit a wider range of participants and views.	
6.	My community council has been able to continue because zoom meetings were available. However, this has meant that attendance (and thus the potential influence on the representations of the CC) was not limited to those able to	Noted the preference for hybrid meetings rather than by just remote means. The decision as to which method of meeting would be for individual community councils to determine. It is anticipated

	<p>attend in person. In theory anyone with an interest could join from anywhere in the world. In our case, this has skewed key decisions of the council. I therefore suggest, in answer to the survey questions, that:</p> <p>1. Meetings <i>should not</i> be allowed in zoom alone. If meetings are to be held in zoom alone, those allowed to speak should be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the electorate; - local authority councillors; - invited specialist guests (but limited to specific topics). <p>2. Meetings <i>should</i> be allowed in a hybrid of in-person and zoom to allow attendance by those temporarily away. However, those allowed to speak should be limited as above. None of this should prevent written representations from anyone or any topic, but it would keep the meetings and opinions local.</p>	<p>that they will be responsive to the needs of their communities. Also noted comments about restricting access to meetings to only the electorate, guests and local authority councillors. This is not consistent with the overall Scheme which requires all meetings and committees of the community council to be held in public. Further consultation would be required to make any such amendment. As already reported to Council, there will be a wider public consultation undertaken in 2022 that will give opportunity to shape a Scheme for the next 4 year term. The current consultation has been restricted to the question of including the option of remote or hybrid meetings as options to safely conduct meetings during the pandemic but will only serve for the remaining term of office (until October 2022). It is recommended that the proposed change not be taken forward at this time on the basis that the author will have opportunity to suggest changes which have a wider impact on the overall governance framework.</p>
7.	I favour holding community council meetings by combination of remote and in person attendance in compliance with The Equality Act 2010.	Noted.
8.	<p>I do support the principle of community council meeting taking place online or as a hybrid model.</p> <p>OSCR produced guidance on this for community groups, and if what the council is proposing is similar, then I would support it.</p> <p>Weather, geography, disability and carers' responsibilities have always impacted on who could be community council members. Add Covid into the mix (and the uncertainties of what mixing will and won't be allowed moving forwards), and I</p>	Noted.

	think it is only sensible to allow for virtual attendance to enable some of our more vulnerable community to still play a role in their community council.	
9.	<p>I am in favour of proposals. Use of remote technology became important during lockdowns, but is also very helpful to people like me - I am over 80, and live from 30 minutes from the nearest meeting location and to 50 minutes from the other main communities served by my community council. The weather has often been too bad for me to make the journey. I do get to some of the local meetings, but have only been to others when the business was particularly important to me.</p> <p>I can just about get Zoom to function well enough to take part in remote meetings, using our Avanti satellite broadband, and if we ever get fibre or other fast broadband (which I doubt will be in my lifetime) it would be quite satisfactory. But there are still households around here with no satellite, landline or 4G to enable remote meetings, so I would be against encouraging Community Councils to meet only by remote means.</p>	It is accepted that the technology is not available in all communities within Argyll and Bute and that is why it is important that community councils have the final decision as to how they hold their meetings. The proposals presented seek to provide additional means of meeting but do not remove the current option of in person meetings. In person meetings may be preferred where there are issues with infrastructure.
10.	I agree with the proposed amendments. We have had more residents attending our own online meetings as this allows those without transport to attend. It is also less damaging to the environment as no matter where within the area we choose to hold our meetings, this involves significant people travelling.	Noted.
11.	<p>1. It is imperative that, in future, attendance (<i>sic</i>) at meetings is both in person and by remote access, regardless of problems arising from Covid-19, other disease pandemics and other impediments to in-person attendance. This provision is for the benefit of both councillors and members of the public attending as observers or as contributors.</p> <p>2. The benefits of enabling remote attendance are especially important in large rural counties such as Argyll and even more so where topography and road infrastructure together with inclement weather can make journeys hazardous in winter.</p>	Changes proposed are in regard to the existing Scheme which, at the time of consulting had 1 year left to run. Further consultation on the content of a local Scheme for the next community council term (typically a four year term) will be undertaken upon publication of a new National Model Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils that is anticipated early in 2022. This work is being led by the Scottish Executive and is currently ongoing. It is expected that a new national position on remote meetings will be unveiled as part of the review.

	<p>3. It is probable that dual modes of attendance will enhance participation, especially amongst members of the public; and, this must be to the benefit of transparent governance, ensuring the spread of information, minimising the opportunity for propagation of false information, and holding councillors to account, particularly where decisions are controversial.</p> <p>4. Availability of remote access to meetings might make participation more inclusive where, for example, a person has caring responsibilities (for either children or adults) that require s/he to be on hand, or where obtaining child/adult minders is deemed too expensive or inconvenient. In addition, remote meetings might facilitate participation of those with disabilities that make in person attendance less easy or even impossible, especially where they are dependent on third parties for transport.</p> <p>5. Remote access should be adopted for a specified period (say, three years) and its success or otherwise reviewed with a view to affirming its adoption or reverting to the conventional mode of meeting.</p>	
12.	<p>I give notice that I object to allowing community councils being allowed to meet remotely.</p> <p>Remote meetings would prevent poor people from being community councillors because they could not afford the cost of the equipment needed.</p> <p>I would remind you that community councillors have no legal entitlement to expenses. Instead, Argyll & Bute Council should petition the Scottish government to change the law so that community councillors have a legal right to claim expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.</p> <p>Until the law is changed I object to remote meetings.</p>	<p>In line with other comments received it is possible to draw a conclusion that in some areas, those without a vehicle, or other means of transport, are being excluded from attending or participating at in person meetings, as are those with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>There is no suggestion that remote meetings must be by video link. A landline or mobile telephone could allow an audio connection and ultimately this may be more inclusive than in person attendance.</p> <p>Members will be aware that there has been ongoing discussion about localising democracy and comments about legislative changes may be best served as part of those ongoing discussions. At present, there is currently an option for community councils to pay travel expenses to</p>

		community councillors or honoraria payments where they are in a position to do so.
13.	I would like community council meetings to be both in person and remote	Noted.
14.	<p>Many thanks for allowing me to make comment on Community Councils. From previous experience, I am certainly not sure that Community Councils are at present making decisions that have the Community at heart and if they are necessary then their meetings should be done face to face. I think it may be an idea to have some form of overseer attend the odd meeting to ensure that they are operating within the rules and taking decisions to benefit some if not all of the community.</p>	<p>Noted the preference for in person meetings. Within current resource allocations, it would not be possible to provide support to all 56 community councils by regularly attending meetings to oversee proceedings. Where communities do not feel that decisions are reflective of their views there is the ability to challenge this. Depending on the circumstances, this may be directly with the community council or via the council.</p>
15.	<p>My choice for delivering Community Council meetings would be the 'hybrid' approach meaning both face-to-face and remote meetings. Having long been an advocate for bringing community councils into the 21st century, hybrid meetings would go at least some way to ensuring the majority of residents have the opportunity to attend.</p> <p>As someone who has attended most of our local meetings over the years, it is very depressing to see how few locals attend. This poor attendance of course is not limited to my local community council.</p> <p>Sadly and despite many requests, my community council has continued to refuse to offer a remote option for their meetings. This has resulted in no meetings for almost 2 years. I consider this unacceptable for local democracy and transparency.</p> <p>A local face-to-face meeting has now been arranged for November, however as it's taking place in the village hall with covid protocols in place, only a maximum of 20 can attend and all windows will be open with no heating, I'm afraid this is not exactly an attractive arrangement for stimulating greater interest in our local</p>	<p>The proposals aim to introduce a range of options. As mentioned in an earlier response, the technology to host remote or hybrid meetings is not available in all areas of Argyll and Bute and options as to how to meet are necessary. Where a lack of skills to host online meetings prohibits a community council from meeting remotely then training and support can be provided but ultimately the decision will lie with individual community councils.</p> <p>For similar reasons, Argyll and Bute encourage online presence but do not make the need for a website compulsory. Although not part of the current consultation, there will be a further consultation undertaken on introducing a Scheme for the next term of office for community councils. This will be launched early in 2022, following on from the anticipated introduction of a new National Model Scheme, currently being reviewed</p>

	<p>community councils.</p> <p>My view therefore is that to fulfil their statutory remit, all community councils should be required to offer a hybrid meeting option.</p> <p>One further area unrelated to meetings, but equally important would be for ABC (or Scottish Government) to consider a portal for all community councils to host their websites in a standardised format. Whilst some of the current CC websites are quite professionally designed, many are very poor and poorly managed with out-of-date data. All up-to-date CC minutes and documents should be available online with easy, uniform accessibility. Unfortunately this is not currently the case.</p> <p>I hope this is helpful to you.</p>	<p>by the Scottish Executive. This will provide a further opportunity to look at the wider provisions of the local Scheme, such as mandatory online presence.</p>
16.	<p>I would like to say I am in favour of having Community Council meetings to be held remotely, or by hybrid means. This is providing proper funding and training is provided</p>	<p>As a meeting cost, any subscription can be met from the administration grant current provided by the Council and this has been reflected in the amended Scheme being presented for approval. Training has and can continue to be made available for those who have not had the benefit of using remote technology through the lockdown.</p>
17.	<p>I believe that allowing meetings (other than the AGM) to be held using electronic communication would be a good thing and support the idea.</p>	<p>Community councils are currently able to conduct AGM meetings by remote means in terms of the temporary departure previously approved by council. Having received no reported issues it is not proposed that AGMs are treated differently. However, the amendments proposed at this time would only be for a period of one year and may offer a trial phase. The council can also be led on this issue by the new National Model Scheme, anticipated in early 2022.</p>

18.	<p>The members of Lochgoil Community Council wish to confirm our agreement with the proposed change to the scheme for community councils: to allow community council meetings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to be held by remote means; and 2. to be held by combination of remote and in person attendance. 	Noted.
19.	<p>I understand that there is an ongoing consultation process regarding the way in which community councils can meet in the future because of the social distancing requirements, etc. In the first instance having online community council meetings would result in even less participation by residents. Online meetings would probably result in even less information being disseminated to local communities (currently who gets to receive information that should be in the public domain is already not easy to come by).</p> <p>The consultation process should have a wider remit. It should allow residents to question the objectivity of community councils when most members are not even elected. How can such a situation be described as the first tier of representation when friends of friends can be invited to sit on community councils without the legal requirement for an election?</p> <p>I recognise that an issue with having 100% elected community councillors is that there are often no candidates. I understand that no candidates standing for election inevitably results in individuals being invited to be councillors by other council members. This very subjective cronyism is not good for the wider community, even though some councillors so appointed do actually and genuinely serve their communities.</p> <p>Reasons why there are rarely any candidates willing to stand for election to community councils could well be because the vast majority of residents are not even aware community councils exists, and if they do, do they know what community councils actually do? What is their remit? What is their purpose? What checks and balances are in place to ensure objectivity, impartiality, transparency, etc, etc? These issues are probably for the council proper - in this case Argyll & Bute - to address.</p>	<p>As with previous feedback provided, there will be a wider consultation conducted early in 2022, following on from publication of a revised National Model Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils anticipated from the Scottish Executive. The current consultation seeks to put in place changes that will only have effect over the remaining term of office of the current community councils (the term will end in October 2022).</p> <p>The comments relevant to the current consultation have been noted. Any remote meetings would need to be accessible to the public and therefore comments about less information being available should not be relevant as public could still choose to attend meetings held by remote means. In addition, there will still be a requirement to keep communities informed of the work of the community council by publishing agenda and minutes of meetings in the local area (while websites and social media are recommended as a means for keeping communities informed, the official requirement is that these documents should be posted in public places such as noticeboards or in libraries)</p> <p>In terms of comments about most members not being elected, this is not currently possible with only 1/3 of the spaces on a community council being filled by co-opted members. Co-option is a</p>

	<p>Information dissemination from community councils to the communities they supposedly represent is another issue that needs addressing. To merely advise people to search online for information about their local community council's agendas and minutes, etc, is to make the false assumption that all residents have access to the internet. They do not. And not all of those who do have internet access know how to carry out effective and meaningful searches.</p> <p>A quarterly printed newsletter to all households would be one way to address information dissemination, with additional newsletters on a needs basis (such as recent information regarding booster jabs against coronavirus; not everyone within my community council area received such potentially important information). And each newsletter for each community council should be to a standard format, etc, etc, and across all community councils.</p>	<p>method of filling a casual vacancy on a temporary basis until the next electoral process is held.</p> <p>The statutory purpose for community councils is <i>"In addition to any other purpose which a community council may pursue, the general purpose of a community council shall be to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area, and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable"</i></p> <p>The remit is generally vague and role of community council is voluntary. Therefore there is not a one size fits all description of what a community council will involve itself in.</p>
20.	<p>I am in favour of remote access to community councils.</p> <p>I don't have strong views between hybrid or completely remote. I think this decision could be left to each council. It would be good for the environment if no car travel was used for any meeting.</p> <p>I would appreciate the ability to watch and listen to community council meetings. It would be good to be able to make a point by typing in a short comment.</p>	Noted.
21.	<p>The second proposal that allowed for a combination of remote and in-person attendance at meetings is the one which Helensburgh Community Council favour, having recently tried our first face-to-face meeting in October since COVID struck. It worked well but there was understandable reluctance from a</p>	Noted.

	<p>number who felt vulnerable. The proposal allows us an option to continue to function until such time as the pandemic eases.</p> <p>In addition we run a successful webinar programme via ZOOM. This has attracted widespread public support who are now used to the system. This means that they have familiar access to our monthly meetings.</p>	
22.	<p>I moved to the area in March last year. Because of Covid no CC meetings were held until last month - 18 months without a meeting. Apparently my community council struggled with the technology to hold on line meetings.</p> <p>Having now been to two meetings I appear to be the only member of the public attending - which begs all sorts of questions about Community engagement.</p> <p>Any efforts/ processes to facilitate having meetings where members of the community can contribute must be seen as a priority for Argyll and Bute Council if local democracy is to work and the views of a select few are not allowed to represent the views of the wider community.</p>	<p>As mentioned previously, there has been an offer of assistance to community groups (including community councils) to train them on holding online meetings during the pandemic and this can be offered again to those who did not choose to meet by remote means.</p>
23.	<p>Iona Community Council has found that engagement increased with our online public meetings and it was certainly easier to secure attendance from off island organisations as there is much less requirement for time and no resources required for travel and accommodation.</p> <p>There are challenges too and for our community that was inclusion as not everyone has the equipment or skill to attend an online event. We were able to assist with technical help and used a platform which allowed people to phone in. With so much online, people were motivated to learn.</p> <p>The broadband infrastructure is an issue too. We don't have fibre and the existing network is at capacity so people do have problems joining, speaking and using their video.</p> <p>Online meetings allowed us to continue when we couldn't meet in person so we found work rounds, asked contributors to send in reports in case of connection</p>	<p>We recognise there are issues with the infrastructure which may prohibit all community councils from holding remote meetings. The consultation seeks to add remote and/or hybrid meetings as an option but the choice of how meetings take place will be one for each community council to take.</p> <p>In regards to financial support for hybrid equipment, at the moment there is no funding from within the community council budget that could accommodate purchase of equipment. Levels of grant support are generally part of the consultation when framing a new/amended Scheme for the next term of office and as such are set for a four year term. With a new term commencing next October, it had been agreed</p>

	<p>issues and coached people. In person meetings would be our preference but we have seen the benefits of online and would like to hold onto that.</p> <p>Overall we would like to hold our public meetings in person but with the opportunity to hold an online meeting if required (say if the weather was very poor or our venue was unavailable). A hybrid meeting would be very useful to bring in off island people on a more regular basis.</p> <p>I have attended hybrid meetings previously and they can be a challenge. The format of a CC meeting though would work well if the online person is delivering a report and answering queries. It also gives an opportunity for a wider audience and facilities like chat functions can help.</p> <p>The issue with hybrid meetings will be equipment. Because our online meetings have been from our homes, our public venues don't have video conferencing equipment and investment will be required to fit them out. What works in your house isn't suitable for a hybrid event so it isn't as simple as bringing along a laptop. Would the council be able to look at grants to help with this? I acknowledge that any equipment would be not for CC use alone.</p> <p>In summary, Iona Community Council would like to retain the ability to hold remote meetings and also to hold hybrid meetings when required. This flexibility would be very welcome.</p>	<p>that the council will hold a further consultation on the wider elements of the Scheme early next year when there will be opportunity to comment on grant levels and other support levels available. This will also allow opportunity to consider the new Model National Scheme, currently under review, and anticipated early next year.</p>
24.	<p><u>COMMENTS FROM STRACHUR COMMUNITY COUNCIL ON REMOTE AND HYBRID MEETINGS</u></p> <p>1. This proposal is worth exploring on the understanding that there would be no obligation on Community Councils to offer online participation nor any expectation that they would do so.</p> <p>2. Whilst remote meetings could be useful as an emergency stop-gap measure to deal with urgent CC business where normal meetings were not possible (e.g. in the event of further lockdowns), it should be recognised that they would</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correct – the proposals offer an additional choice regarding how meetings are held. 2. Noted but previous comments apply, in attending remote meetings could be by audio only. 3. Agreed, the infrastructure throughout the area may not permit hybrid meetings.

	<p>disenfranchise members of the public who do not have the necessary technology.</p> <p>3. Hybrid meetings might improve participation by members of the public, but only where broadband connections were reliable.</p> <p>4. If it is decided that remote and/or hybrid meetings should be either obligatory or expected, or that they should be encouraged by Argyll & Bute Council, funding would need to be available for the purchase of necessary IT equipment, including computers for all Community Councillors.</p> <p>5. Residents were asked their views via the Strachur & District Newsletter and the Community Facebook page. As no comments were received, there appears to be no enthusiasm in the community for remote and/or hybrid meetings and we have no evidence whether or not they would improve the 'attendance' of residents.</p>	<p>4. The amendments proposed will not be obligatory.</p> <p>5. Noted the community consultation work undertaken. Community Councils should be responsive to the needs of their community when determining what method of meeting may serve them best.</p>
25.	<p>Tiree Community Council have discussed this topic at several (online) public meetings over the last few months, asking for feedback. We have also asked constituents to write to us through the island's fortnightly newsletter.</p> <p>We are aware of at least three regular attenders at our past face-to-face meetings who do not attend our online meetings. One of these has told us they prefer physical meetings in the hall. Although agencies on the island have worked hard during the pandemic to combat digital exclusion, it still exists. Poor connectivity has sometimes meant that councillors and members of the public have found it hard to express themselves online.</p> <p>However, the unanimous opinion of the council, and the overwhelming feedback to us, are extremely positive about online meetings. A number of issues have been brought up:</p>	<p>Noted the feedback received and the positive impact holding remote meetings has had in the experience of Tiree Community Council.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiree Community Council is fortunate in having several members who work professionally with IT systems • Our attendance has increased from 5-15 before March 2020 to 15-30 today. During lockdown, attendance went as high as sixty • People who are not able to attend face-to-face meetings due to care commitments or disability are now able to join online • The chat function allows contributions during meetings • The screenshare function allows documents and maps to be displayed during the meeting • The translation function has meant that we can provide simultaneous translation of proceedings into Gaelic, a world first • Argyll and Bute councillors, who all live off the island, are now able to join our meetings easily, and their attendance has greatly increased. This addresses the democratic deficit – caused by the lack of resident councillors – suffered by Tiree • Visiting speakers can easily join our meetings, and this has also increased significantly <p>We believe that the connectivity of our public spaces on the island make hybrid meetings more of a challenge at the moment.</p> <p>Tiree Community Council therefore strongly supports an ability for community councils to continue to be allowed to hold online meetings. We do recognise that face-to-face meetings still have a place, and we aim to hold at least two of our ten public meetings a year in the public hall.</p>	
26.	Rhu & Shandon Community Council approve that the existing Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Argyll and Bute be amended to allow Community Council meetings to be held by combination of	Noted the feedback received. The comments regarding voting by email would be something that could be explored in terms of future amendments to the Scheme. This, however, would be reserved to those attending the meeting (attendance being amended to include those

	<p>remote and in person attendance. By this we understand that a particular meeting may either be in person or on-line.</p> <p>We also feel that there should be provision made in the Scheme to allow for voting by email.</p> <p>In normal circumstances we meet every two months but there have been several cases in the past when a response from the Community Council has been required which did not allow for a meeting to be held to approve our response. This consultation is a case in point. We have consulted our members and they have responded, but it would be better if this approach were to be made official</p>	<p>participating remotely). This will assist in ensuring that final decisions take account of all views expressed, including those that may be presented at the meeting itself.</p>
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