

Green Party calls for permanent reinstatement of hybrid council meetings



Green Party

18 July 2022

Green councillors across England are backing a Local Government Association (LGA) call for the reinstatement of remote hybrid council meetings [1]. They say emergency regulations during the Covid lockdowns that gave councillors the choice of attending in person or remotely via the Internet should become a permanent feature. Green MP Caroline Lucas last week tabled an Early Day Motion in parliament calling on the government to make democracy more accessible “by making permanent the express provision for hybrid council meetings [2].” The move away from hybrid meetings applies only to England; remote council meetings brought in during the pandemic continue to work effectively in Wales.

North Somerset Green councillor Dr Karin Haverson said:

“Greens believe the reinstatement of hybrid meetings is essential to the democratic process. Enforcing attendance at person only meetings restricts disabled people and people with caring responsibilities to fully and fairly participate. Research by the LGA revealed that following a return to forced in-person meetings 72 per cent of councils saw a drop in councillor attendance at statutory council meetings. We need to make it as easy as possible for people from all sorts of backgrounds and circumstances to become councillors and for those elected to represent their communities. That means the reinstatement of hybrid council meetings – permanently.”

Councillor Blossom Gottlieb, a disabled Green District councillor in East Hampshire, who worked with Caroline Lucas on the EDM, has been prevented from attending meetings due to the return of the in-person legislation. She said:

“It’s alarming that since May 7 2021, councillors who need it haven’t had access to remote meetings. This is ableist legislation by the government’s own definition [3] and also means councillors are travelling for meetings that could otherwise be held online, which is often the greenest option. I’m disappointed that so much of my time as a councillor has been spent battling against discrimination. This is just one symptom of our failing governmental

system.”

Green MP Caroline Lucas said:

“Democracy is precious – it belongs to us all. Disabled people, carers, single parents, and all others must have open, easy access to the democratic processes. I’m pleased to have worked with Cllr Blossom Gottlieb on this EDM calling for accessible council meetings – and I urge everyone to ask their MP to sign.”

Notes

1. [LGA calls for urgent legislation for remote council meetings – LGA](#)
2. [Accessible council meetings – Early Day Motion](#)
3. <https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>

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