

# New guidance on safe use of council offices

- Updated guidance on safe use of council buildings and face-to-face meetings published today
- Regulations on virtual council meetings introduced at start of the pandemic to end on 7 May
- Councils asked to share their experiences of virtual meetings

Updated guidance on the safe use of council buildings has been published today (25 March 2021) following confirmation that emergency legislation regarding virtual council meetings will not be extended.

Local Government Minister Luke Hall has today [written to all council leaders](#) praising them for their extraordinary efforts during pandemic, including ensuring vital council business was able to continue by adapting to virtual meetings at short notice last year.

He also confirmed that given the significant progress of the vaccination programme and the roadmap for lifting COVID-19 restrictions, as well as current pressures on the legislative programme, the government has decided not to bring forward the primary legislation needed to extend the current regulations at this time.

In order to support councils, [guidance has been updated to help them operate safely and securely](#), including using existing powers to reduce the number of face-to-face meetings deemed necessary.

Councils are also being encouraged to share their experiences via a [call for evidence](#) about how remote meetings have been used to inform any potential future legislation regarding their use beyond the pandemic.

Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government Luke Hall said:

Councils continue to play a vital role in our response to the pandemic and I am grateful for how they have used emergency powers introduced a year ago to continue to operate at a difficult time.

As the vaccine roll-out continues and restrictions are lifted, councils holding face-to-face meetings from 7 May are being given the support and guidance they need to do so in a safe and secure way.

I am keen to hear from councils and local residents about their experiences of virtual meetings so that we can properly consider whether to make these a permanent option.

After 7 May, councils have a role to play to ensure essential meetings take place safely, following the necessary Covid guidance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the government introduced the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to enable all local authority meetings before 7 May 2021 to be held remotely.

The regulations were brought in specifically to help local authorities deal with the challenges of holding in-person meetings during the coronavirus pandemic.

The regulations also require local authorities to allow members of the public to access meetings remotely, and they also removed the requirement for local authorities to hold an annual meeting in 2020.

View the [call for evidence](#).