

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS VIA AUDIO OR AUDIOVISUAL CONFERENCING SYSTEM POLICY

Type:	Council – Elected Members		
Owner:	Council		
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer		
Approval Date:	27/06/2023	Next Review:	30/11/2025
Records Number:	179562	Council/CEO Decision:	Council OCM-052-2023
Legislation Reference:	Sections 95(3)(a) and 98(3)(a) of the <i>Local Government Act 2019</i>		

1 PURPOSE

This policy authorises a member’s attendance at a meeting by an audio or audiovisual conferencing system and describes the duties and obligations of a member who attends by audio or audiovisual means, in accordance with sections 95(3)(a) and 98(3)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2019*.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to elected members, committee members and Council employees with Katherine Town Council.

3 DEFINITIONS

CEO means Chief Executive Officer

Meeting includes any meeting of Council, Audit and Risk Management Committee or Council Advisory Committee.

Members means a member of council, Audit and Risk Management committee or council committee.

4 DETAILS

Where possible, Council is committed to facilitate access and participation in meetings by permitting members to be present and participate remotely by means of audio or audiovisual conferencing systems.

4.1 Attendance

A member may attend any meeting via an audio or audiovisual conferencing system.

It is desirable, but not mandatory, that members give at least 1 days’ notice to the CEO that they intend to attend the meeting via the conferencing system and the reason(s) for not being physically present at the meeting.

4.2 CEO responsibilities

The CEO must ensure the provision of the necessary equipment, and setup of that equipment, to provide an adequate conferencing system that enables remote attendance of members.

The CEO must ensure that the audio or audiovisual conferencing system is switched on and tested for the meeting and the relevant members have the correct information to enable their attendance (e.g. phone number, video link or other login details to enable a member to attend remotely).

4.3 General responsibilities

The Chair of a meeting must ensure that any member attending a meeting remotely is offered the same or substantially the same opportunity to participate in debate, and to register an opinion, on questions arising for decision, as if the member were physically present at the meeting.

All members in attendance are to abide by the Code of Conduct and, if attending via audiovisual conferencing, are to consider the appropriateness of their personal presentation and surrounding environment to the extent that they would if the member were attending the meeting in person.

The Chair is to confirm which participants are present at the commencement of the meeting.

The minutes of a meeting must identify whether each member attended in person or by audio or audiovisual means.

A member who is attending by audio or audiovisual means must advise the Chair if they are about to leave the meeting. A member must also advise the Chair immediately if they re-join the meeting. These details are to be recorded in the minutes with a reference to the member's time of departure and time of return (if applicable).

If technical issues arise that prevent a member from being heard or to hear during the meeting, the chair can declare that the member has left the meeting. If the chair experiences technical issues and has left the meeting, then council/committee must by resolution appoint a member as the presiding member being the Deputy Mayor/Deputy Chair in the first instance or another member if the deputy is unable to preside.

4.4 Conflicts of interests

It is the responsibility of individual members attending a meeting remotely to ensure they do not participate in an agenda item, or hear the discussion, if they have declared a conflict of interest in the matter.

The member must ensure they declare the conflict and disconnect from the conferencing system at the appropriate time (i.e. prior to discussion of the particular agenda item).

Where a member has disconnected from the conferencing system due to a conflict of interest, the Chair must contact the member as soon as the agenda item has concluded and request that they re-join the meeting.

4.5 Confidentiality

Members attending meetings remotely must:

- (a) ensure that people who are not members cannot see, overhear or listen to the member or the meeting (unless the Council is aware and accepts the circumstances);
- (b) not record the meeting unless all members in attendance at the meeting agree to the member recording the meeting; and
- (c) ensure that confidential papers are not accessible by any person who is not a member.

Note: People who are not members are able to attend meetings in a manner allowed by the Council.

4.6 Voting

All members present at a meeting must exercise their vote on a question arising for decision. Before each agenda item and resolution, to ensure the participation of any members attending remotely, the Chair is to confirm that members attending remotely are able to hear the discussion and vote. Unless the council decides unanimously to

take a vote by secret ballot, voting is to be by show of hands. In the case of secret ballots, the member will provide their vote to the CEO in confidence, who will then place it into the ballot box.

5 ASSOCIATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

Elected Members Conflicts of Interest Policy

Elected Members Code of Conduct

6 REFERENCES AND RELATED LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 2019

Revision History

Version	Approval date	Details of change	Responsible officer
1	24/11/2020	Created and adopted	Policy Review Committee
2	20/06/2023	Reviewed – changed to new template, minor administrative amendments and under item 4.1 addition of ‘and the reason(s) for not being physically present at the meeting’	Governance and Executive Officer
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