



**To: Council Chief Executives**

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Our ref:  
Date: 21 September 2023

Dear Chief Executive

### **Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings**

Further to my letter of 24 March 2023.

Section 78 (local authority meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 contained provision to provide councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means during the Coronavirus emergency. This included an enabling power for the Department to make subordinate legislation regarding remote/hybrid meetings and the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 were subsequently made and came into operation on 1 May 2020.

The expiry date of section 78 (Local Authority Meetings) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 was previously extended to 24 September 2023, thus allowing councils to continue to hold remote/hybrid meetings under the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2020.

This was intended as an interim measure until such time as proposals for more permanent legislation, made under section 2 of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021, could be considered by a Communities Minister. In the absence of the Assembly, it has not been possible to make permanent appropriate regulations.

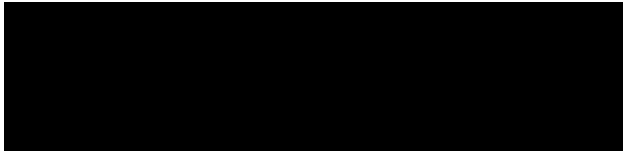
The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings) (No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 was made on 21 September 2023. This extension order has been made to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act for a further 6 months until **24 March 2024** which will allow councils to continue to offer a remote/hybrid facility for meetings.



As previously highlighted, an Order to extend section 78 of the Coronavirus Act is subject to the confirmatory procedure in the Assembly and, whilst it comes into operation once made, it will cease to have effect 40 days from the date of making unless it has been approved by resolution of the Assembly (the 40 day period does not include any time in which the Assembly is dissolved, in recess for more than 4 days or adjourned for more than 6 days).

The Department will continue to monitor the situation and keep councils informed.

Yours sincerely



**Anthony Carleton**  
**Director**  
**Local Government & Housing Regulation**