



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Luke Hall MP**

*Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

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29 April 2021

Dear colleague,

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS – HIGH COURT JUDGMENT**

Following the application by Hertfordshire County Council, the Association of Democratic Service Officers, and Lawyers in Local Government, the High Court has issued a judgment that the Local Government Act 1972 does not allow local authorities to hold meetings virtually.

The High Court has concluded that existing legislation specifies that council meetings must take place in person at a single, specified, geographical location and being “present” at such a meeting involves physical presence at that location.

Regulations which have allowed local authorities to meet remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic do not apply to meetings after 6 May, and in my letter to you of 25 March I explained that the Government has concluded that it is not possible to secure primary legislation to extend the regulations to meetings beyond this date.

While the court’s judgment was limited to the interpretation of provisions relating to meetings within the scope of the Local Government Act 1972 – and therefore I would encourage all authorities to study the court’s judgment for themselves to understand how it applies to their circumstances – after 6 May this means that councils will need to return to face-to-face meetings and you should continue to prepare accordingly.

I recognise there may continue to be concerns about holding face-to-face meetings. Ultimately it is for local authorities to apply the Covid-19 guidance to ensure meetings take place safely, but the Government has published updated guidance to highlight ways in which councils can, if necessary, minimise the need for, or risks of, face-to-face meetings.

I am also encouraged by the continued success of the vaccination programme and the progress through each of the steps of the Government’s Roadmap. By 17 May it is anticipated that a much greater range of indoor activity can resume and you should consider the extent to which meetings can operate on the same basis as other local

institutions in your area, taking into account your individual circumstances and requirements.

I am grateful for the efforts that local authorities have made to allow remote meetings in their area and recognise that there has been a considerable investment of time, training and technology to enable these meetings to take place. I would therefore encourage you to participate in our Call for Evidence on the use of remote meetings before it closes on 17 June, so that we can better evidence our next steps in this area.

I am copying this letter to the chairs of the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Councils.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L Hall', is positioned below the closing text.

**LUKE HALL MP**

cc. Cllr. James Jamieson, LGA Chairman  
Cllr. Sue Baxter, NALC Chairman