



Association of Democratic Services Officers
North East, Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Meeting
16 October 2020

Present: Michael Robson, North Tyneside
Katherine Harclerode, Rotherham
Scott Bonner, Middlesbrough
St John Harris, Scarborough
Vicky Foreman, Selby
Christine Marriott, Sheffield City Region
Elizabeth Jackson, Harrogate
Linda Scott, Newcastle
John Austin, ADSO Chair

Apologies: Dave Brown, North Tyneside
Emma Hill, Rotherham
Liz Kerr, North of Tyne CA
Mike Bird, Northumberland
Claire James, Sheffield City Region

1. Welcome and Introductions

Katherine and Michael had recently agreed to represent the region on the ADSO Board and were keen to:

- a) share information with members in the region;
- b) understand the issues facing members; and
- c) provide members with opportunities to share experiences and best practice and to learn from one another.

Today's agenda had been designed to fulfil these objectives.

2. Future Regional Meetings

Katherine invited comments and ideas on how future regional meetings might be conducted when the following principles were agreed:

- video conferencing provided a more accessible and efficient means of meeting one another, negating travelling time and costs;
- the region should aim to meet on a quarterly basis;
- an annual face to face meeting would be beneficial, when possible;
- the Zoom software was inaccessible on some authority's equipment and so alternative software such as Microsoft Teams should be considered;
- regional meetings were useful in providing DSOs with a wider regional and national view on matters, complementing the ADSO website, message board and newsletters



- not all members had received the emailed invitation and so the membership renewal process would provide an opportunity to update and refresh the membership lists;
- members be invited to suggest topics for consideration at regional meetings.

3. ADSO Update

John provided a report on the latest developments within ADSO.

He paid tribute to the amazing response by the sector to the challenge of administering remote meetings. Thanks to hard work of officers the transition had appeared to have gone smoothly and this had been recognised by organisations such as LLG thereby raising the profile of democratic services. John promoted the use of the LGAs [Remote Council Meetings Hub](#) a central pool of information, advice and guidance from our partners across the sector. ADSO were in the process of lobbying for an extension of the remote meetings powers and had received a positive response.

ADSO was redesigning its annual training course so that it could be delivered remotely and a regular series of webinars were to be offered.

The ADSO Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony were to be held on Thursday 26 November 2020 at 5pm.

4. Remote Meetings

During a short workshop members shared experiences and best practice in relation to remote meetings. The workshop highlighted the following issues:

- a) Public participation had increased in terms of the number of people viewing live and recorded video meetings;
- b) Local democracy reporters valued remote access to meetings;
- c) Live broadcasts and access to recordings had altered some members behaviour, some for the better but some for the worse;
- d) How long should recordings of meetings be available after the meeting? Not at all, for a limited period of time as stated in a retention policy or indefinitely?
- e) Attendance by councillors had increased despite the technological challenges, particularly in larger rural authorities where members had been required to travel significant distances to meetings;
- f) Members of the public had participated in some video conferencing meetings but their access to the associated chat functions had proven problematic;
- g) How long can democratic services teams maintain the level of support required to arrange and administer remote meetings without additional resources and investment;
- h) Would a more consistent approach to remote meetings across all authorities be better;



- i) The Government and local authorities would need to begin planning for the possibility of remote admission appeal hearings in 2021 taking into account the experiences of clerks, panel members and appellants.