

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

15 February 2022

Item 21 – Members’ Questions

From Cllr Edward Kirk, Trowbridge Adcroft

To Councillor Ashley O’Neill, Cabinet Member for Governance, IT, Broadband, Digital, Licensing, Staffing, Communities and Area Boards

Question (22-02)

TEAMS meetings

I have attended several TEAMS Council meetings (video off unless speaking), where Officers and the Council consider it acceptable for a motion/proposal to be considered agreed/carried, as long as no member voices dissent.

The Oxford Dictionary states a vote is ‘to show formally by marking a paper, raising your hand, using a voting machine, etc’.

Personally, I do not consider having to voice dissent in a meeting as a vote on a motion/proposal.

Please to demonstrate that members are paying attention (participating) in these TEAMS meetings and haven’t popped out to take the dog for a walk, cut the grass, are on the telephone etc....

Please can the Cabinet Member responsible consider adopting a mandatory policy in TEAMS meetings of a recorded vote or show of hands?

Response

Approval with assent of the meeting is a valid approach where there is no dissent. and referencing it is up to the chair and that while online meetings are not formal meetings any longer, it would be up to the meeting to decide what is appropriate, with reference to protocol 13 our online protocol .

The Council Rules of Procedure - Part 4 of the Constitution paragraph 22 on voting, and specifically 22.3 under Affirmation, allows the Chairman to take the vote by the affirmation of the meeting. In other words, alongside the definition of a vote detailed in the Oxford Dictionary above, approval with assent of the meeting is a valid approach where there is no dissent.

Since the expiration of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 on 6 May 2021, only informal meetings take place online (Area Boards meeting informally online make recommendations to the

Leader. These recommendations are then formally made by the Leader through a single-member decision process). It is a matter for the meeting to decide what is appropriate. Protocol 13 of the Constitution details the temporary rules of procedure for remote attendance and voting at Council meetings.