

Agenda item 7

For decision – Whether to support the petition asking for Government to permit virtual council meetings

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The Government brought in temporary legislation early last year to permit virtual council meetings across the country and in so doing enabling council business to continue during the lockdown. This legislation has now expired, and the Government has decided not to bring in permanent legislation to enable virtual meetings to continue.

This decision has been met with universal disapproval and the Local Government Association and Hertfordshire County Council challenged in the High Court whether the Government could continue with this temporary arrangement. In the past two weeks the High Court has sided with the Government. This means that for Council business to be conducted legally, Cllrs have to meet in person and space be made available for the press and public.

Government is consulting on whether there is support for virtual council meetings to be held alongside physical ones, at some point in the future.

Buckfastleigh Town Council (see [Appendix 2](#)) has started a petition asking for the Government to find a way of allowing council meetings to be conducted virtually.

Recommendation

Support the Buckfastleigh Town Council petition asking for the Government to find a way of allowing council meetings to be conducted virtually and respond to the Government's consultation on this subject in the same way.