

9. **MEMBER'S ANNUAL ATTENDANCE REPORT (JMC)**

Purpose of the report

To consider the annual return of Members' attendance at Authority, Committee meetings and essential Member training events for 2020/21

Key issues

1.
 - As DEFRA and other appointing Authorities regularly request information on the attendance level of their appointed members, the Authority publishes attendance figures annually based on the financial year, in this instance 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
 - To consider the effect that the COVID 19 pandemic has had on Member attendance at committees and training and to take into account the move to virtual meetings as a result of the pandemic.

Recommendation

2.
 1. **To note the annual return of the Members' attendance for 2020/21 at meetings of the Authority, Standing Committees and essential Member training as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The Authority Meeting on 24 June 2005 (Min.62/05) agreed a set of performance measures for Members. The measure for meetings is the percentage of full Authority meetings and approved duties actually attended, that Members could have attended. The Target: is at least 75% overall and 75% of each specific meeting. The purpose of this report is to monitor attendance and commitment.

The Governance Review Working Group, which presented its second report to the Authority meeting on 22nd May 2020, was specifically asked to revisit the issue of reporting on Members attendance and if attendance should continue to be recorded as possible and actual rather than percentages, and whether other meetings involving Members such as working groups and site visits should be included. The Working Group concluded that the existing reporting arrangements worked well and should continue to be produced in the current format. The Authority approved the recommendation of the Working Group for an annual report on Member attendance at meetings of the Authority, Standing Committees and essential learning and development events only.

Background

4. The annual return shown in Appendix 1 (attached to the report) has been compiled from the attendance records at full Authority, Standing Committee meetings, and essential learning and development events for the period April 2020 to March 2021. The Authority has previously agreed that the use of individual percentages would not be published so the information is presented to provide a comparison between possible meetings attended and the actual number of meetings attended. Overall for 2020/21 the attendance at meetings was 85%. This compares to an overall figure of 72% for 2019/20 and 81% for 2018/19.
5. During 2020/21, Local Joint Committee did not meet so this has been omitted from the attendance statistics this year.

6. The Covid-19 Pandemic situation affected how the Authority conducted its meetings during 2020/21. Initially due to a lack of legislation to allow remote Member meetings the Authority were immediately in a position to rely on the Chief Executive's emergency delegation powers to consider planning applications during April, May and June 2020 which was undertaken in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee and on one occasion by the Chair of the Authority. However the meeting of the Programmes and Resources Committee scheduled for the 20th March 2020 was cancelled due to the inability to hold remote Member meetings. Following a change in Government legislation in April 2020 the Authority amended its Standing Orders and took advantage of the ability to hold virtual meetings of its decision making Committees and Authority meetings which occurred up until 6 May 2021 when the Regulations ended.

Given the rise in the overall attendance figure during this period from 72% in 2019/20 to 82% in 2020/21, the use of virtual meetings may have contributed to this increase. Attendance at all committee meetings exceeded the target of 75%.

7. **Essential Member Training**

At the Authority meeting held on 7 October 2016 (Min.38/16) a Framework for Member Learning and Development was approved. In the Framework document, it states that attendance at training and other events would be monitored and reported. The target for overall attendance at events identified as "essential" in the Member Learning and Development Plan is 50%. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation the annual Authority Members' Tour and Planning Tour were not held during this period but workshops were able to be held as virtual meetings. Overall for 2020/21 the attendance at these events was 72%, an increase in performance compared to 2019/20 (60%). The returns for 2020/21 are shown in Appendix 1.

Committee attendance by the Chair and Deputy Chair of Authority and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Standing Committees as Observers

Standing Order 1.45(1) states that the Chair and Deputy Chair of Authority and the Chairs of Standing Committees may attend the meetings as an observer of a Committee they are not appointed to where they are able to speak but not vote. In the absence of the Chair of a Standing Committee, the Vice Chair may attend instead. In the relevant time-period, there were no instances where a Chair or Vice Chair attended.

The attendance figures above only relate to attendance as an observer, attendance as a participating Committee Member is set out in Appendix 1. Since July 2018 the Chair has been a Member of both Standing Committees.

Proposals

8. The annual return is provided for information and for Members to note.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

9. **Financial:** No issues.

10. **Risk Management:**
There are no apparent risks

11. **Sustainability:**
There are no issues to highlight.
12. **Equality**
There are no issues to highlight.
13. **Climate Change**
Members not having to travel to Authority and Standing Committee Meetings may have contributed to the reduction of the Authority's carbon footprint.
14. **Background papers** (not previously published)
None

Appendices -

Appendix 1 – Members' Attendance Record: April 2020-March 2021

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Joanne Cooper, Democratic and Legal Support Officer, 24 June 2021