

## **EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO**

### **The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**SR 2022 No. 108**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Communities to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under section 90(2) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 ("the 2020 Act") and is subject to the confirmatory resolution procedure.

#### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1. The purpose of the Order is to extend the expiry date of section 78 (local authority meetings) of the 2020 Act by 6 months.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1. Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 made provision to provide local authorities with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means during the Coronavirus emergency. Section 78 included an enabling power for the Department to make regulations regarding remote/hybrid meetings and the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 were subsequently made and came into operation on 1 May 2020.
- 3.2. The extension of section 78 will permit the arrangements introduced under the 2020 Act to continue to be used until 24 September 2022, providing councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means.

#### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1. This Order has been drafted using provisions provided for under the Coronavirus Act 2020. There is no statutory requirement for subordinate legislation made under section 90 of the Coronavirus Act to be consulted on. The Order will not introduce any new policy but will simply extend the provisions of section 78 of the Act by 6 months. The Department has received representations from councils and local government groups asking for the provisions on remote/hybrid meetings to be extended. Councils and the local government sector have welcomed the flexibility and inclusiveness that being permitted to hold meetings remotely or in hybrid form has provided.

#### **5. Equality Impact**

- 5.1. The provisions of the Order are technical in their nature and do not give rise to any equality concerns. No new policy is being implemented.

**6. Regulatory Impact**

6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment is not considered necessary. There will be no impact on businesses, charities or voluntary bodies.

**7. Financial Implications**

7.1. None.

**8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**

8.1. The Department is satisfied that these regulations comply with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

**9. EU Implications**

9.1. Not applicable

**10. Parity or Replicatory Measure**

10.1. Not applicable

**11. Additional Information**

11.1. Not applicable