



EMP-GOV-012 | Online Meeting Attendance or Attending Meetings Electronically

Strategic Context

Strategic Link	Policy Objective
☑ United ☑ Safe & Healthy ☑ Beautiful & Respected ☑ Prosperous & Equitable	The objective of this policy is to establish the governance arrangements for Council Members attending the Council and Committee meetings by electronic means. , Ensuring participation is lawful, transparent, and consistent with legislative requirements of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> (The Act) and the <i>Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996</i> .

Introduction

1. The Shire of Halls Creek Council (the Shire) understands that from time to time that Council Members or Committee Members recognises that attending meeting by electronic means modern communication technologies provides the opportunity to support flexible participation in Council and Committee meetings. Given the geographic scale of the Shire and the practical realities of travel in remote regions, the ability for Elected Members to attend meetings by electronic means can assist in maintaining quorum, supporting continuity of governance, and enabling informed decision-making.
2. While in-person attendance remains the preferred method of participation to promote effective discussion and community engagement, Council acknowledges that circumstances may arise where physical attendance is impractical. Online meeting attendance provides a mechanism to support participation in a lawful and structured manner, consistent with legislative requirements and good governance principles.
3. This policy establishes a clear framework for the approval, conduct, and management of online attendance at Council and Committee meetings. It ensures that participation by electronic means maintains meeting integrity, transparency, accountability, and compliance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and associated regulations.

Purpose

4. The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear and consistent framework for the attendance and participation of Elected Members in Council and Committee meetings by electronic means.
5. This policy supports Council's commitment to effective governance by enabling participation where physical attendance is impractical, while ensuring compliance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and associated regulations. It provides clarity regarding the circumstances in which online attendance may be approved, the expectations for participation, and the safeguards required to maintain meeting integrity.
6. The Policy aims to balance flexibility with accountability by ensuring that online attendance does not compromise transparency, quorum requirements, deliberative processes, or community confidence in Council's decision-making.



Policy Scope

7. This policy applies to all Elected Members of the Shire of Halls Creek and governs attendance at Ordinary and Special Council Meetings, and Committee Meetings, by electronic means were permitted under the *Local Government Act 1995* and associated regulations.
8. The Policy establishes the circumstances under which online attendance may be requested and approved and outlines the expectations for participation to ensure meetings are conducted in a lawful, transparent, and orderly manner.
9. This policy applies only to formal meeting attendance and does not extend to informal briefings, workshops, training sessions, or other non-decision-making forums unless otherwise determined by Council.
10. Online attendance under this policy must comply with legislative requirements relating to quorum, voting, public access, confidentiality, and meeting procedures. Where inconsistencies arise between this policy and applicable legislation or local laws, the legislation prevails.

Policy Statement

11. The Shire of Halls Creek is committed to maintaining effective, transparent, and accountable governance. Council recognises that, due to the geographic scale of the region and the practical realities of travel in remote areas, circumstances may arise where an Elected Member is unable to attend a Council or Committee meeting in person.
12. Online attendance may be permitted in accordance with legislative requirements and this policy, if participation by electronic means does not compromise the integrity of meeting proceedings, quorum requirements, or the transparency of Council decision-making.
13. Council affirms that in-person attendance remains the preferred method of participation, as it supports effective deliberation, community engagement, and meeting conduct. However, where approved, online participation must ensure that the Elected Member is able to hear and be heard clearly, engage in discussion, and participate in voting in a manner consistent with legislative obligations and meeting procedures.
14. Online attendance must be managed in a way that preserves confidentiality where required, maintains public access to meetings as prescribed by legislation, and upholds the standards of conduct expected of Elected Members.

Principles Underpinning the Policy

Principle Name	Principle Definition
Good Governance	Online meeting attendance must support effective governance and not diminish the quality of deliberation, decision-making, or accountability of Council.
Legislative Compliance	Participation by electronic means must comply with the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> and associated regulations, including requirements relating to quorum, voting, confidentiality, and public access.
Meeting Integrity	The integrity of meeting proceedings must be maintained at all times. Online attendance must not disrupt orderly conduct, debate, or procedural fairness.
Transparency and Public Confidence	Online participation must preserve transparency and ensure that public access to meetings, where required, is not compromised.



	Council decision-making processes must remain visible and accountable.
Role Clarity	Elected Members attending online remain bound by the same obligations, responsibilities, and standards of conduct as those attending in person.
Security and Confidentiality	Appropriate safeguards must be in place to protect confidential information and ensure that participation occurs in a secure environment, particularly during closed sessions.
Equity and Fair Access	Online attendance should provide a reasonable and fair opportunity for participation while recognising that in-person attendance remains the preferred method.
Operational Sustainability	The use of online attendance should be managed in a way that supports continuity of governance, particularly in remote or emergency circumstances, without creating undue administrative burden or technical risk.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	The person appointed by Council under section 5.36 of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Shire.
Committee Meeting	A meeting of a committee established by Council under the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> .
Council Meeting	An Ordinary or Special Meeting of Council convened in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> .
Electronic Means	Technology that enables real-time audio or audio-visual communication, including video conferencing platforms or teleconferencing systems, allowing an Elected Member to participate remotely in a meeting.
Elected Member	A Councillor or the Shire President elected or appointed to the Council of the Shire of Halls Creek.
Meeting Procedures	The Council Meeting Procedures Local Law or adopted Meeting Procedures Policy governing the conduct of Council and Committee meetings.
Online Attendance	Participation in a Council or Committee meeting by an Elected Member via electronic means, where the Member is not physically present at the meeting venue.
Presiding Member	The Shire President or other person authorised to preside over a Council or Committee meeting in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> and meeting procedures.
Quorum	The minimum number of Elected Members required to be present, whether physically or by approved electronic means where permitted, for a meeting to be legally constituted.

Policy Details

15. Approval for Online Attendance

- 15.1 An Elected Member seeking to attend a Council or Committee meeting by electronic means must notify the Chief Executive Officer as soon as practicable prior to the meeting. Approval for online attendance will be granted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*, associated regulations, and any limitations prescribed under meeting procedures.
- 15.2 Online attendance is not intended to replace physical attendance as the standard practice. In-person participation remains the preferred method of attendance. Online participation is to be utilised where circumstances such as travel constraints, illness, weather events, or other reasonable factors prevent physical attendance.

16. Legislative Compliance

- 16.1 Online attendance must comply with all legislative requirements relating to quorum, voting, confidentiality, and public access. An Elected Member attending online is considered present for the purposes of quorum and voting only where participation complies with statutory requirements.
- 16.2 Where legislative conditions for electronic participation cannot be satisfied, the Member will not be deemed present for quorum or voting purposes.

17. Technical Requirements

- 17.1 An Elected Member attending online must ensure they have access to reliable audio or audio-visual technology that allows them to hear proceedings clearly and be heard by all other participants. The technology used must enable full participation in debate and voting.
- 17.2 The Shire will make reasonable efforts to facilitate electronic attendance; however, the responsibility for maintaining a suitable internet connection and environment rests with the Elected Member.
- 17.3 Where technical failure prevents meaningful participation, the Presiding Member may determine that the Elected Member is no longer able to participate for the purposes of quorum or voting.

18. Conduct and Participation

- 18.1 Elected Members attending online are bound by the same standards of conduct, meeting procedures, and governance obligations as those attending in person. Participation must be active and continuous throughout the meeting unless the Member formally withdraws.
- 18.2 An Elected Member attending online must participate from an appropriate location that preserves meeting integrity and, where applicable, confidentiality.

19. Confidential Sessions

- 19.1 Where a meeting moves behind closed doors to consider confidential matters, an Elected Member attending online must ensure they are in a private and secure setting. The Presiding Member may require confirmation that no unauthorised persons are present.
- 19.2 If confidentiality cannot be assured, the Elected Member may be excluded from that portion of the meeting.

20. Voting

- 20.1 Voting by an Elected Member attending online must occur in a manner that clearly records the Member's vote in accordance with legislative requirements and meeting procedures. The Presiding Member must be satisfied that the vote has been accurately captured.

21. Record of Attendance

- 21.1 The minutes of the meeting will record whether an Elected Member attended in person or by electronic means, consistent with legislative and reporting requirements.



Accountability

22. Council is accountable for ensuring that online attendance at Council and Committee meetings is permitted and managed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*, associated regulations, and this policy. Council must ensure that the use of electronic participation supports effective governance while maintaining the integrity, transparency, and lawful conduct of meetings.
23. The Presiding Member is responsible for overseeing the conduct of meetings where one or more Elected Members attend by electronic means. This includes ensuring that quorum requirements are met, participation is meaningful, voting is clearly recorded, and meeting procedures are applied consistently. The Presiding Member also retains discretion to determine whether technical or procedural issues prevent effective participation.
24. Elected Members are responsible for seeking approval for online attendance in accordance with this policy and for ensuring that their participation complies with legislative requirements and meeting procedures. Elected Members must ensure they participate from a secure and appropriate environment, particularly during confidential sessions, and must maintain continuous and active engagement throughout the meeting.
25. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for facilitating administrative and technical arrangements necessary to support online attendance, maintaining accurate records of attendance, and ensuring that governance and compliance requirements are upheld. The Chief Executive Officer must also ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to manage confidentiality, technical reliability, and recordkeeping.
26. This shared accountability framework ensures that online attendance enhances governance continuity without compromising legislative compliance, meeting integrity, or public confidence in Council decision-making.

Related Documentation / Legislation

Legislation	Shire of Halls Creek Documentation
a. <i>Local Government Act 1995 (WA)</i> b. <i>Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 (WA)</i> c. <i>Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007 (WA)</i> d. <i>State Records Act 2000 (WA)</i>	a. EMP-GOV-001 - Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates

Policy Review

27. This policy will be reviewed every two (2) years, or earlier if required due to legislative change, audit findings or a resolution of Council.



Document Control

Relevant delegations	Nil		
Risk Evaluation	Moderate		
Council adoption	24/09/2026	Resolution	2026/105
Next review due	September 2028		