

PROTOCOLS FOR FORMAL REMOTE COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS (GENERAL)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations') came into force on 4 April 2020 and apply to local authority and police and crime panel meetings that are required to be held, or held before 7 May 2021.
- 1.2 Whilst necessary formal amendments to the Councils Standing Orders and other sections of the Council's Constitution will be submitted for adoption at the Annual Council meeting on 20 May 2020 that meeting will be summoned and conducted in accordance with the new Regulations.
- 1.3 To complement the formal changes to the Constitution the following protocols have been drafted to ensure that debate and decision making at meetings is as accessible and transparent as possible to all parties taking part or wishing to view/hear proceedings.
- 1.4 Testing will take place on the remote accessing systems to be used before the first formal meeting to be held under these Regulations.
- 1.5 It must be accepted that these protocols may add additional time to meetings, changes in the way reports are presented and that participants will need to be patient and disciplined and respect the direction from the Mayor/Chair.

2. In advance of a meeting

- 2.1 Agendas for meetings will be circulated in accordance with the relevant timescales via the Council's committee management system (Moder.Gov), with Members of the Committee also receiving hard copies. The agenda will include details of how the public may 'access' the meeting over the internet.
- 2.2 Councillors will be given instructions dependent upon how they are intending to access meetings from the options listed below:
 - Laptop with video camera
 - Laptop without video camera
 - Desktop PC with camera
 - Desktop PC without camera
 - Tablet (i.e. IPAD)
 - I Phone / Smart phone
 - Phone (i.e. landline or mobile)

- 2.3 Members should read the agenda before the meeting and if they have any technical questions on a report or require clarification on any matters contact the relevant officer beforehand to discuss.
- 2.4 If a Member knows in advance that they want to ask a question or raise a particular point in the meeting they should notify the Mayor/Chair and relevant Constitutional Services Officer prior to the meeting.
- 2.5 Members are asked to access the meeting no later than 15 prior to its start, however access to the meeting will be open 30 minutes before the scheduled start time so that if anyone has a problem accessing the meeting they have time to contact our IT support team on **telephone number will be quoted**. If, once the meeting has started, you lose connection and have issues reconnecting an alternative emergency number will be provided.
- 2.6 Members will be sent the Zoom access codes before each meeting
- 2.7 Be aware that Members accessing a meeting with use of a camera or video link they and their surroundings can be seen at all times. Members should consider locating their access device in a quiet room where they will not be disturbed.
- 2.8 To avoid background disturbance each Members' electronic access mute facility should be used at all times other than when the individual Member is called to speak.
- 2.9 Make sure your devices are fully charged or plugged into a power supply for the duration of the meeting.
- 2.10 Have everything you need to hand such as the agenda, note paper, refreshments etc. as leaving the meeting may affect your participation when a vote is taken.
- 2.11 The Mayor/Chairs will be separately briefed before each meeting.

3. Conduct of the meeting

- 3.1 The person presiding will open the meeting and make a roll call of all Councillors who are appointed to serve and officers who are advising/support the meeting. This will not only establish who is 'present' but also by which media link they are using e.g. Zoom, dial-in etc.
- 3.2 The meeting will proceed in accordance with the Council/Committee Standing Orders (as amended by the Regulations).
- 3.3 Rules regarding declaration of interests apply in the same way as previously.

- 3.4 With regard to the signing of the minutes the Mayor/Chair will ask Members if they are content with the minutes of the previous meeting and if they indicate they are this will be noted by the Constitutional Services Officer. Hard copy minutes will then be signed by the Mayor/Chair when restrictions are lifted.
- 3.5 The Mayor/Chair will take each item in turn. If a Member requires to speak they must indicate in the manner detailed for the individual means of access they are using. A Member must not speak until they have been called by the Chair.
- 3.6 As at any 'traditional' meeting Members must show respect to each other and do not attempt to talk over someone who is already speaking.
- 3.7 The rules of debate and time limits for speaking, as set out in standing orders, will apply.
- 3.8 When the Mayor/Chair considers that there has been sufficient debate they will call the debate to a close and remind the meeting of the Motion/recommendations that is/are to be voted upon. The Mayor/Chair will then call on each Member entitled to vote and ask whether their vote is in favour, against or they wish to abstain. This is not a 'recorded' vote and will not appear in the Minutes unless a formal recorded vote is requested.
- 3.9 The Mayor/Chair will state whether the Motion/Recommendations have been either carried or lost dependent upon the outcome of the vote. In the event of a tied vote the Mayor/Chair will have the casting vote.

4. Part II Business

- 4.1 As public access is via streaming following the relevant Exclusion Motion the streaming facility will be suspended. Members taking part in Part II debates must ensure that the meeting or what they are saying themselves cannot be overheard by others in their individual locations.

5. Public Participation

- 5.1 As previous stated public access is via a streaming facility and therefore there is no provision for speaking from the 'public gallery'. Where a facility for someone other than a Councillor or officer is required e.g. the Planning & Development Committee, details of access will be given directly.

6. Specific Meetings

- 6.1 These general protocols will apply to all meetings. More detailed guidance will be provided for meetings such as Annual Council, Planning & Development Committee, Licensing Committee and Scrutiny Select Committees.

