

REMOTE MEETINGS PROCEDURE RULES

These Procedure Rules shall govern the general conduct of remote meetings of the Council, its Committees and Scrutiny Commissions conducted pursuant to 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 2020 Regulations).

These Rules have been drafted by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to the power vested in him under Article 16.02 of the Constitution and agreed by the Chairs of the Overview & Select Committee; the Licensing Committee and the Planning & Development Control Committee.

For the purposes of compliance with the law, and the efficient administration of business, these rules may be modified from time to time for particular meetings, as advised by Legal and/or Democratic Services Officers.

How will remote meetings be conducted?

Remote meetings will take place via electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers. Members may be able to participate by remote means (including, but not limited to video conferencing, live webcast, live interactive streaming) in accordance with arrangements agreed from time to time by the Council. Members should try to establish video conferencing capability however, by exception they may attend by audio only.

How will notice of remote meetings be provided?

The Monitoring Officer will give five clear days' notice of the meeting in accordance with Schedule 12 Local Government Act 1972. The notice will provide details of how the meeting shall be open to the public which shall be through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.

Regulation 4(1) of the 2020 Regulations abolishes the need for "further" notice should we need to change that meeting time/place/venue, however the Council will use reasonable endeavours to provide notice of changes where practicable.

How will papers be provided?

Agendas and reports will be published five clear days before the meeting through the Council's website. Elected Members will be provided with paper copies of agendas and reports as a matter of course whilst meetings are held under the 2020 Regulations.

Notice of Remote Link

Democratic Support and other officers have worked with Members to establish their ability to connect to remote meetings. If, following the notice of a meeting being published, a Member is aware of an IT or other problem that would prevent them from engaging in the meeting, they must inform the relevant Democratic Support Officer as soon as possible.

The remote means must be established and tested before the commencement of the meeting

Record of Attendance

The Chair will confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting (or at the relevant Agenda item where a participant is joining for just part of a meeting), that they can see and/or hear all participating Members (to include Committee Members, and also those non-Committee Elected Members who are exercising a right to speak) as well as any members of the public who have a right to speak. Participating Committee Members must also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that he/she can see and/or hear the proceedings and the other attendees. Democratic Services will record attendance on behalf of Members.

Quorum

Any Member so authorised to participate by remote conferencing shall be regarded as present. In the event of any failure of the video conferencing link the Chair will immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate, if it is then the business of the meeting will continue, if there is no quorum then the meeting will, only in such circumstances, adjourn for a period specified by the Chair to allow the connection to be re-established.

Disruption to remote conferencing

Should the conference link fail for all Members, the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes to determine whether the link can quickly be re-established. If the link cannot be re-established the meeting shall be adjourned to a later agreed date.

Where the conference link that permits public access to the meeting fails, the meeting will no longer be “open to the public” and the Chair will call for an adjournment to re-establish the link, failing which the meeting will be adjourned to a later agreed date.

In the event of link failure for individual Members, Chair may use their discretion to call for a short adjournment to re-establish a connection. If the individual Member’s link is successfully re-established then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment. Where a remote Member loses contact with the meeting, if debate/presentation took place during that time, which cannot reasonably be revisited when the Member re-joins, the Member will be deemed to have not taken part in that item and will therefore not be able to continue further in that item or vote

Where reconnection is not established promptly, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure of the equipment and if the link cannot be re-established before the end of the meeting then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item providing the meeting remains quorate.

A similar approach will be applied to non-Committee Elected Members, and members of the public, who are exercising a right to speak.

Declaration of Interests

Any Member participating by remote link who declares an interest in any item of business in terms which requires them to leave the room must ensure that they cannot be seen or heard during the agenda item. This shall be confirmed by Democratic Services. This member of staff will thereafter confirm to the remote Member when they may re-join the meeting. Where possible, any declarations

of interest should be established through discussion with the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting and any intention to refrain from partaking in a particular item of business should be notified to Democratic Services on the working day before the scheduled meeting.

Notification of Right to Speak

The Chair shall determine at the commencement of the meeting how Committee Members should notify them that they wish to speak considering whether video or audio conferencing is being used.

Where the meeting includes participation from members of the public or non-Committee Elected Members who are exercising a right to speak, the Chair shall determine at the outset of the relevant agenda item how this right shall be exercised.

For Planning and Development Control Committee, this shall be exercised in accordance with the Guide for Public Speaking , which will be amended for virtual meetings, unless such rights have been suspended

Voting

A remote Member participating in a vote on a substantive resolution on an item of business on the Agenda will cast his/her vote as if participating in a recorded vote. Where a vote is required on a procedural matter arising within the meeting, or on approval of the Minutes, the vote will be undertaken by means which will be set out by the Chair.

Exclusion of Public

If a remote Member wishes to participate in discussion of a confidential/exempt item they must verify that the venue is secure, that no member of the public has access and that no recording of the proceedings is being made, by any person. The members of staff present will ensure that no recording is taking place. Democratic Services will ensure that members of the public and non-Committee Elected Members (where relevant) have left the meeting.

Attendance by the Public and Press

Members of the public and press entitled to attend a meeting will be provided with details on how to access the meeting through remote means.