

Hungerford Town Council – Protocol for Remote Council Meetings

(Adopted at F&GP 12/05/2020)

Introduction

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) came into force on the 4 April 2020.

The Regulations remove the legal obligation to hold local authority meetings at a specified physical location, by permitting members and others attending the meeting to do so by way of ‘remote attendance’.

This Protocol applies to meetings of the Council or its Committees, etc, that would, but for the coronavirus pandemic and the Regulations, be held in public. It does not apply to informal meetings such as working party meetings.

Participants

For the purpose of this protocol, ‘Participant’ refers to

- a town councillor (including co-opted committee members)
- any member of public, if they are permitted or invited to speak
- an officer or professional adviser assisting proceedings

Chairman of the meeting

The Chairman will manage the meeting and will be assisted by an officer acting as ‘Host’, who will help to control access to the meeting and monitor participants.

Protocol

- 1 Participants shall ensure their Zoom Profile identifies them as a councillor by using the prefix Cllr before their name. Officers should also identify themselves. It should be clear to members of the public observing proceedings, who is present.
- 2 Any Participant who joins a meeting by telephone will be identified by their title, name and a still photographic image where possible.
- 3 To ensure the smooth running of the meeting, Participants should join the Zoom waiting room 10 minutes before the start time of the meeting so that it can start promptly - all Participants will remain in the Zoom waiting room until they are admitted to the meeting by the Host.
- 4 The meeting will be recorded.
- 5 At the discretion of the host, all microphones (except the Chairman’s) may be muted on entry into the meeting and they shall remain muted unless a Participant is invited to speak by the Chairman. The muting and unmuting of microphones will be left to the discretion of the host.
- 6 Participants wishing to speak shall indicate this by using the ‘Zoom Raised Hand’ (available via the Participants field, in turn triggered by the Participants key at the base of the Zoom screen) or by physically raising their hand. The Host will make a note of Participants wishing to speak, and will provide the Chairman with details of those who have indicated a desire to do so, by reading a list of names at the appropriate points in the meeting.
- 7 If any of the Participants have entered the meeting via telephone rather than by way of the video facility, they will be asked by the Chairman whether they wish to speak. This will usually be after Participants who have joined using video, and indicated they wish to speak, have spoken.

- 8 Where a Member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Registrable Interest in an agenda item that would in ordinary circumstances require them to leave the meeting room for the duration of the item, the Clerk/Host will ensure the member is held in the 'waiting room' so is effectively leaving the meeting for the duration of the item.
- 9 The Chairman will invite Participants to speak in any order (this will not overrule the rules of debate at full Council).
- 10 Participants wishing to raise a point of order or personal explanation should signal this by putting their hand up by using the option in the participants tab or by physically raising their hand, stating their name, and saying either, "Point of Order" or "Matter of Personal Explanation". They will wait until the Chairman invites them to address the meeting.
- 11 Voting will take place by using the options found by clicking the Participants tab. Those eligible to vote will respond in one of three ways:
 - "For" To indicate that they support the proposal, click Yes (green tick)
 - "Against" To indicate that they oppose the proposal, click No (red cross)
 - "Abstain" To indicate that they do not wish to cast a vote either for or against a proposal. Do nothing.
- 12 If the Chairman considers that the meeting should be adjourned for any reason, s/he will advise the meeting of this fact and provide a time at which the meeting will resume.
- 13 If a meeting contains Items which are confidential then, following a resolution to exclude the press and public, the following steps will happen:
 - The Chairman (or one of the Supporting Officers) will explain that confidential items are to be discussed, and the meeting will therefore then close for members of the public.
 - The Host will ensure they leave the meeting or are put in the waiting room and that all recording is stopped.
 - Before the private meeting resumes, the Host will be asked to confirm that all members of public have left.
 - A separate recording if required can be made of any Part 2 held.