



POLICY RELATING TO REMOTE MEETINGS DURING CORONAVIRUS

1. **Introduction:** Northway Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate and has developed this policy to assist Councillors, Officers, Members of the Public and Press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist people to engage in debate and decision making. This policy is to be delivered within 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020' currently enacted for meetings up to 7 May 2021 if necessary.
2. **Publishing the Agenda:** Councillors are to be summonsed in line with current regulations with the Agenda being sent to Members and displayed on the Council's website. No agendas will be published on physical notice boards. Any person unable to access the Council's website must contact the Council and request an electronic copy of the agenda be forwarded as appropriate.
3. **Virtual Meeting 'platform':** Northway Parish Council will utilise Zoom Cloud to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices and desktop personal computers. It also allows Members to Call in if they are unable to attend with video. In preparation for the meeting the Clerk to the Council will provide Councils with the:
 - Zoom meeting link;
 - Meeting ID, and:
 - Meeting passcode
4. **Standing Orders:** Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present at a meeting held at Northway Community Hub and Parish Office.
5. **Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements:**
 - a) **Discussions** – During the meeting all persons other than the Council Members or Officer will be muted. All Councillors attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise and mute their own microphones, except when speaking, to negate interference with the meeting.

During the meeting Councillors will raise their hand to indicate to the Chairman that they wish to speak on an agenda item. Councillors may also use the chat facility in Zoom for the same purpose.
 - b) **Voting** – All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands.
 - c) **Poor connectivity** - In the case of poor connectivity the Chairman will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene. In the case of video not being available for some or all of Members attending the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for Councillor views on individual agenda items.
 - d) **Attendance** – If a Councillor is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be Minuted. If 'drop outs' result in the meeting becoming inquorate Members will endeavor to re-join for a period of 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, if the meeting is still inquorate, the Chairman will suspend the meeting and reconvene at a later time and date, subject to the Statutory Days of Notice. Councillors will be telephoned to advise of the suspension.

Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements: (Continued)

6. **Virtual Meeting Etiquette:** Normal Standing Orders apply with regard to Conduct at Meetings and all attendees are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people experience with regard to the operation of technology. Behavior that is contrary to the intended outcome of the meeting will be dealt with at the discretion of the Chairman. For a member of the public or press this may result in them being dismissed from the Zoom meeting.
7. **Declarations of Interests:** A Councillor that has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the waiting room. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made the Councillor will be returned to the meeting.
8. **Public Attendance and Participation:** Members of the public wishing to attend the virtual meeting can gain the relevant access information via the Parish Council web site. During the public participation period members of the public will be required to 'enable video' to be visible to the Chairman and will raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. Their microphone will then be unmuted, and they can address the meeting. Following the conclusion of their address the microphone will be muted and their video switched off. Standing Orders in relation to public participation will be followed as if persons were present.
9. **Confidential Matters:** Confidential matters will be dealt by removing anyone to the Waiting Room who is not allowed to be present and will only, therefore, be available to Councillors. Councillors must also bear in mind that they are, most likely, in their home surroundings and confidential matters must remain confidential, even from other members of their household. If this is not possible the Councillor must advise the Chairman who will then place them in Waiting Room. On conclusion of the confidential items Members of the Public and any Councillors who have had to leave can be brought back into the meeting, although Members of the Public will be placed on mute.
10. **Recording:** Zoom meetings will be recorded and once the Minutes have been approved the recording will be deleted.

For further information see the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>