

## **REMOTE MEETINGS PROCEDURE RULES**

These Procedure Rules provide the rules for the conduct of any remote meeting of the Council, Cabinet or its Committees and Sub-Committees, held under the provisions of 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 make provision for remote attendance at, and remote access to, council meetings held on or before 7 May 2021 and remain valid until 7th May 2021.

The regulations enable the council to hold meetings without all, or any, of the members being physically present in a room. This allows for remote meetings through electronic, digital, virtual locations, live webcast, live interactive streaming, video and telephone conferencing.

The 'place' at which the meeting is held may be a council building, or where the organiser of the meeting is located, or an electronic, digital or virtual location, a web address, or a conference call telephone number.

In order for members to be able to attend meetings of the council remotely, they need not be physically present, provided they are able to hear and be heard (and, where practicable, see and be seen by) other councillors and members of the public attending remotely or in person.

The procedure rules in this constitution apply to remote meetings in the same way as they do for other meetings of the council except where they conflict, in which case these procedure rules takes precedence over other procedure rules in relation to the governance of remote meetings.

### **1 Access to Information**

For all purposes of the Constitution, the terms "notice", "summons", "agenda", "report", "written record" and "background papers" when referred to as being a document that is:

- (a) "open to inspection" shall include for these and all other purposes as being published on the website of the council; and
- (b) to be published, posted or made available at offices of the Authority shall include publication on the website of the Authority.

### **2 Remote Access to Meetings**

- (a) For all purposes of the Constitution the term "meeting" is not limited in meaning to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place, for which purposes any reference to:
  - (i) "place" is to be interpreted as where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers: and
  - (ii) "open to the public" includes access to the meeting being through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming and where a meeting is accessible to the public through such remote

means the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person; and

- (b) If the Chairman is made aware that the meeting is not accessible to the public through remote means, due to any technological or other failure of provision, then the Chairman shall adjourn the meeting immediately. If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period, then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chairman. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

### **3 Members in Remote Attendance**

- (a) A Member in remote attendance is present and attends the meeting, including for the purposes of the meeting's quorum, if at any time all three of the following conditions are satisfied, those conditions being that the Member in remote attendance is able at that time:
  - (i) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other Members in attendance.
  - (ii) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and
  - (iii) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
- (b) A Member in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance contained in (a) above are not met. In such circumstance the Chairman may, as they deem appropriate;
  - (i) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for remote attendance of a Member contained in (a) above to be re-established; or
  - (ii) count the number of Members in attendance for the purposes of the quorum and if the meeting is quorate, continue to transact the business of the meeting in the absence of the Member not in remote attendance.

### **4 Remote Attendance by Members of the Public Exercising a Right to Speak**

- (a) A member of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak in relation to an item of business being discussed at the meeting is in attendance at any time if all three of the following conditions are satisfied, those conditions being that the member of the public in remote attendance is able at that time:
  - (i) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, Members in attendance;

- (ii) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any other members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting in relation to that item, and
  - (iii) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting remotely.
- (b) A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point during consideration of that item, any of the conditions for remote attendance contained in 4(a) above are not met. In such circumstances, the Chairman may, as he or she deems appropriate:
  - (i) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for remote attendance contained in 4(a) above to be re-established; or
  - (ii) suspend consideration of that item of business until such time other item(s) of business on the agenda has been transacted and the conditions for the member of the public's remote attendance have been re-established; or
  - (iii) if steps (i) or (ii) above have not been successful deal with the item of business in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.

## **5 Remote Voting**

Unless a recorded vote is called for by a member, the method of voting will, at the discretion of the Chairman, be:

- (a) by the affirmation of the meeting if there is no dissent [by assent]; or
- (b) by the calling out of the name of each member present and voting with the number of votes for or against, or abstaining from the motion or amendment being recorded [by roll-call]

## **6 Record of Attendance**

The requirement for members present during the whole or part of a meeting to sign their name on the attendance sheet before the conclusion of every meeting is dispensed with and instead the Member Services Officer present will introduce the members by name at the start of the meeting, or if they join after the start of the meeting, their name will be announced upon joining the meeting.

## **7 Member's Conduct**

Council Procedure Rules 20.1 and 20.2 of the Council Procedure Rules (standing to speak at Council) are dispensed with.

## **8 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Pecuniary Interests – Withdrawal from Meetings**

A Member must withdraw from the remote meeting during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Pecuniary Interests except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of the grant of a dispensation or under any

provision of the Code of Conduct. Where a Member is required to withdraw from the remote meeting, the means of remote attendance and access is to be severed whilst any discussion or vote takes place in respect of that item of business.

## **9. Exclusion of Public and Press**

- 9.1 Where by resolution, the public (and press) have been excluded from a meeting in accordance with Council Procedure rule 19 and Access to Information Procedure Rule 10 every member must ensure there are no other persons present in their remote location who are able to hear, see or record the proceedings (unless such persons are entitled to be so present).
- 9.2 Members must declare to the meeting if at any point the requirement at 9.1 is not met.