

# **STREET PARISH COUNCIL**

## **PROTOCOL FOR REMOTE MEETINGS**

ADOPTED 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020

REVIEWED FEBRUARY 2023

NEXT REVIEW FEBRUARY 2025

### **1. Introduction**

On 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 the Government introduced The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 to allow local councils to meet remotely. This protocol sets out how Street Parish Council will continue to operate during the pandemic and at any other time when Regulations allow the holding of remote meetings. It will be attached as an Annex to the Council's Standing Orders.

At present the Council is operating on the Zoom platform but it may meet in another electronic, digital, or virtual location such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

The Council has paid for a subscription to Zoom and informed all councillors of how to access the platform and that they should contact a member of staff if they have any technical issues or need headphones.

### **2. Preparation for a meeting**

The meeting will be advertised in the normal manner on the website but there will not be notices on noticeboards. The meeting notice will give details of how the public can observe the meeting and if they wish to raise a question to submit it by phone or email 24 hours before the start. The agenda will be sent out within the normal time frames and all non-confidential papers will be available on the Council's website.

Minutes of meetings will be produced and displayed on the website in the normal manner. Minutes will be circulated after the meeting and signed when the Council finally meets face to face. Apologies will need to be given in the normal manner.

The normal required standards of behaviour and discussion must be applied in the same manner as a face to face meeting. Please also be patient with those who are less experienced in this platform. Please also respect confidentiality and do not breach the Code of Conduct.

If a councillor is deemed to have an interest in a matter and would normally leave a physical meeting, then the host will place them in the waiting room and then bring them back into the meeting when the matter has been considered. Alternatively, they may be required to log out of the meeting and will receive a chat message, text message or email from the host inviting them back into the meeting when the matter has been considered.

There may be technical issues during the meeting and the Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk may have to ask for clarification, for dialogue to be repeated in order to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

### **3. Process to host meetings for councillors**

The Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk/Chair will host the meeting and set up the meeting perimeters. An email invitation will be sent to councillors from the host and they will need to click on the link and if necessary, enter the meeting ID number and password.

Before entering the meeting please ensure that you are in a private place where there is little background interference/noise/people. It is difficult to hear on occasions and some might wish to use a headset with a microphone.

On entering the meeting you will be placed in a waiting room. The host allows access and you will join with their microphone muted. When the host has seen you and can verify you, you will be unmuted.

A check will be done to establish that you can be heard and, where practicable seen and that you can hear and, where practicable see others at the meeting. All councillors other than the Chair and the Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk will then be muted. If the Chair invites someone to speak they can be unmuted. Please do not interrupt others. If you wish to speak during the meeting, please raise your hand using the functionality provided for the attention of the host. When you speak please state your name for the benefit of those who might not be able to see you.

The meeting will still be chaired in the normal manner. The Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk might have a greater input to guide the meeting to the next item, as some will not have access to an agenda for the duration of the meeting if they do not have a printer.

If there is to be a vote this will be carried out by the Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk reading out the name of each attending councillor so that they can state whether they are for, against or abstaining from the proposal being considered. This may also be done by asking councillors to raise their hand using the functionality provided until asked to put their hand down.

If a councillor has a problem with hearing etc. during the meeting, they should use the chat box to type a message which will be seen by the host.

If people speak over others or if there is a time delay and matters are not heard the Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk will ask for people to repeat and to speak in turn. All councillors will have the text number of the host and can send a message during the meeting if they are experiencing issues.

If the Council resolves to exclude the press and public from part or all of a meeting, the Chair will make a statement to explain the reasons for this. The Chair will thank the public for their attendance, notify councillors that a new meeting invitation will be immediately issued by email to them only, and close the remote meeting.

#### **4. Public participation**

The agenda will include an invitation for the public to contact the Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk by email if they wish to be invited to the meeting. They will be sent an agenda and on the day of the meeting will be sent a link to the meeting, with the ID number and password. They will be asked to check that the link works prior to the meeting.

On arrival at the meeting, they will be held in a waiting room and let in against a list of names held by the host. This is to avoid the entry of unknown people who have disrupted other public meetings with inappropriate behaviour. A check will be done to ensure that each can be heard and, where practicable seen and that they can hear and where practicable see others at the meeting.

If the public wish to ask any specific questions they will need to have informed the Clerk/Deputy Clerk/Assistant Clerk of this 24 hours before the start of the meeting by phone or email.

#### **5. Streaming of Meetings**

It was agreed to stream meetings live on the Council's YouTube channel so that they were open to the public. On 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 it was agreed to hold meetings on YouTube for 2 months.