Virtual Committee Meeting Procedure Rules

Under 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020' these procedure rules will apply to virtual committee meetings held by the council and are effective between 4th April 2020 and 7th May 2021.

1. The council's adopted standing orders will continue to apply to committee meetings but are modified by these rules to facilitate virtual meetings.

2. A council meeting may take place for conducting virtual meetings at no specific location. All council meetings will be conducted using the Zoom application.

3. The Agenda will be published as usual – five working days before the meeting takes place. Members will be notified by email and are able to view the Agenda online. Members will not be provided with hard copies of committee meeting papers.

4. Members must use their Council email address when participating in meetings and will receive a Zoom meeting ID and password before the meeting. This will give them access to the meeting online.

5. Virtual meetings will be hosted by the Governance Services team or A/V technicians with the Chairperson of the meeting given co-host abilities.

6. The usual quorum requirements for committee meetings will still apply to remote meetings.

7. The Chairperson will open the discussion by confirming the Members and Officers present at the meeting.

8. Members of the public who are permitted and wish to speak will be invited to submit a video (maximum length three minutes) which will be played during the meeting. Alternatively, a written statement (to a maximum length of three minutes when read out) can be submitted which will be read out at the meeting. Submissions are to be received by the Governance Services Manager by either telephone or e-mail and by no later than 5pm on the day before the meeting.

9. The Governance Services Manager reserves the absolute right to refuse accepting any video or statement that is considered inappropriate.

   This includes matters:

   (a) that the council have no responsibility for;

   (b) that do not affect or have relevance to the borough;

   (c) that are defamatory, frivolous or offensive;

(d) that are part of an issue that has previously been considered by a meeting of the council in the past six months to which there has been no material change of circumstances;

(e) that would require disclosure or discussion of a confidential or exempt matter.

Members of the public who would still prefer to speak at the Zoom meeting will be given a Zoom meeting ID and password. They will be held in a virtual 'waiting room' until it is their turn to speak. Once they have done so, they will have to leave the meeting. The length of time that the member of the public will have to wait in the 'waiting room' depends on the length of time it takes for other items to be dealt with on the agenda so cannot be certain.

The Chairperson has the absolute discretion to remove members of the public from the discussion if they are interrupting the meeting, try to engage in the discussion or are abusive having been warned about their behaviour.

10. Members who wish to submit a question can do so by email to the Governance Services Manager by no later than 12.00 noon, five clear working days before the meeting. The council's standing orders that apply to questions by members under the Council Procedure Rules will continue to apply.

11. All members of the council have the right to attend both the public and private sessions of a committee meeting providing they do not have a conflict of interest in any of the matters being considered.

12. If a member, who is not a member of a committee, wishes to attend that committee including any private session, they should contact the Governance Services Manager by 5pm the day before the meeting to indicate their wish to do so, for the necessary arrangements to be made for them to be included in the Zoom meeting.

13. Members should make the Governance Services Manager aware of any conflicts of interest, pecuniary interests or non-pecuniary interests in advance of the meeting wherever possible to assist the management of the meeting. Where a Member will have to leave that part of the meeting due to their declaration of an interest, the Governance Services Manager will arrange for them to move to the virtual 'waiting room'.

14. The Governance Services Manager will arrange for them to receive a Zoom meeting ID and password before the meeting. This will give them access to the meeting online.

15. The Chairperson's direction and ruling at the meeting shall be final and not open to discussion.

16. Members should show respect to each other, and any other individual attending the meeting, and to not talk over someone who is already speaking. Members are asked

to keep their microphone on mute until they are invited to speak to help maintain the audio quality of the meeting.

17. The Chairperson will go through the Agenda in the usual way and members should take their 'cue' from the Chairperson as to when they can speak.

18. Minutes-the Chairperson will ask the Members if they agree with the minutes of the last meeting and if they agree, it will be noted by Governance Services. The hard copies of minutes can be signed by the Chairperson as soon as is reasonably practicable or alternatively, electronic signatures can be arranged after the meeting.

19. Members are asked to 'arrive' to the virtual meeting at least 15 minutes before the meeting time called on the agenda, so that the meeting host can check names on screens and make any other checks. Governance Services will make a note of all attendees.

20. In the event of any connection failures, the Chairperson should determine if the meeting is still quorate. If the meeting still is, then it will go on as usual. If there is no quorum, the Chairperson will specify how long the meeting is adjourned for. It is expected that adjournments should be for no more than ten to fifteen minutes to enable the connection to be re-established.

21. For smaller meetings, members who wish to speak should raise their hands visually. The Chairperson will call out the name of the next speaker and they should then speak. For larger meetings, members can either raise their hand or use the 'raise hand' function within Zoom.

22. Speakers will be allowed to speak in the order indicated. No member should speak unless given permission to do so.

23. When the Mayor/Chairperson speaks during a debate, any member speaking at the time must stop speaking and allow the Mayor/ Chairperson to be heard. The host of the meeting will be able to mute other participants' mics.

24. Voting will be managed by the Chairperson by asking members for a show of hands. Members will vote FOR, AGAINST or ABSTAIN. If necessary, the Chairperson will take an individual roll call for each member of the committee to confirm their vote. The voting results will be documented by Governance Services. In the event of equality of votes, the Chairperson has a casting vote in line with the normal rules.

25. All meetings will be live streamed and recorded for members of the public to access via the Council's website. Minutes will be published on the council's website as usual.

26. It is advisable for members and officers participating in virtual meetings to present themselves in appropriate attire. Good lighting is recommended to help enable faces to be seen clearly. Members are also advised to choose a plain, neutral background

such as a plain wall or door behind them. Members need to be careful to make sure confidential papers or information are not seen during the meeting.