



Selsey Town Council Virtual Meeting Protocols

AIM

In holding virtual meetings, in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, Selsey Town Council seeks to ensure the smooth and efficient conduct of its business in a transparent, accountable and accessible way.

OBJECTIVES

The Council will hold virtual meetings:

- For the period of time allowed by the Regulations (currently to May 2021) unless the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions on public gatherings and social distancing allow physical meetings at an earlier date.
- To enable the Schedule of Meetings for 2020/21 to resume.
- In accordance with the published Schedule of Meetings 2020/21.
- To allow the smooth and efficient transaction of Council business.
- To support and enable attendance by Councillors, officers, members of the public and the press.

SCOPE

These protocols apply to:

- Councillors, including the Chair and Vice Chair of Council and its Committees
- All officers of the Council
- Any third party in attendance

PROTOCOLS

BEFORE THE MEETING:

Councillors should:

- Prepare for the meeting, raising questions and organising paperwork in advance to support the smooth conduct of business. Have the agenda, meeting guidance and supporting documents to hand.
- Familiarise themselves with Zoom using the 'how to' videos available via the platforms website.
- Check broadband connection and prioritise the connection to their chosen device if possible. Consider alternative provision such as the data allowance from a mobile phone contract or connecting via an audio only telephone call (note that call charges may apply).

- Ensure their chosen device is connected to a power source or is fully charged before the meeting.
- Choose a quiet location within the home where noise and/or disturbance is less likely; should the meeting agenda contain confidential matters this should be a space from which other members of the household can be excluded.
- Choose a well-lit area if possible and position the camera to provide a clear view of face and shoulders; check this in advance of the meeting.
- Be aware of what can be seen of the home environment in the background; do not have personal items and/or confidential or personal data on display.
- Test that the microphone is working and the sound is on. Consider using headphones. Do not have the meeting playing on multiple devices in the same room as this can cause feedback/distortion.
- If the agenda contains confidential or exempt items ensure that smart devices (such as an Alexa speaker or Echo Dot) are disabled during that part of the meeting and ensure that no other members of the household can hear the discussion.
- Ensure they know how to access support from officers during the meeting should difficulties occur which interrupt or prevent participation.
- Send apologies or notification of lateness ahead of the meeting in the usual way.
- Be ready to attend the meeting at the invited arrival time so that officers can admit councillors to the virtual 'chamber' in advance of the meeting to test connectivity prior to admitting members of the public and press in time for the advertised start time.

DURING THE MEETING

Councillors should:

- Use the Participants button to raise a hand to speak. This will flag up Cllrs in order to the host of the meeting.
- Observe Standing Orders, speak clearly and concisely making the point efficiently.
- Be cognisant at all times that members of the public will be able to observe councillors much more directly than in a physical meeting; be aware of body language and facial expression.
- Refrain from eating and/or shuffling papers; background noise can be disruptive to the business of the meeting.
- Declare interests in relevant items of business in the usual way.
- Mute the microphone when not speaking.
- Identify themselves by name before making a comment or proposal.
- Speak only when invited to do so by the Chair.

Members of the public should:

- On joining the meeting mute their microphone
- Enable their video is turned on to identify themselves
- Only switch their microphone on if requested to do so by the Chairman
- Only speak when the Chairman asks you to speak
- If you wish to speak be aware that you will be required to;
 - Provide your full name and official title where appropriate at the start of the meeting
 - Confirm whether you are a registered elector of Selsey Parish
 - If you are not a registered elector as above you will need to state the basis on what you are raising the issue

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations embodied in the Data Protection Act 2018 (The Act) members of the public when speaking must not provide information that either directly or indirectly identifies any individual.

The Chair of the meeting should:

- Liaise with the Clerk/Deputy Clerk before each meeting to agree responsibilities.
- Be familiar with the Zoom platform; know how the mute/unmute, hand wave/thumbs up and other participant functions work so that advice can be given to others.
- At the start of the meeting welcome the councillors and the public. Explain what the meeting is about and describe how remote participation will work. Explain the extent/limits of public participation.
- Take a roll call of councillors present. Explain the names and job titles of officers who are present.
- Explain how the agenda will be followed, the process for decision making and how councillors and members of the public will be invited to contribute and note the time limits that apply.
- Explain the voting systems to be used.
- Explain how confidential/exempt items will be handled.
- Describe the technical management of the meeting and who will perform this (Deputy Clerk).
- Remind members of the need to state their name and position, ie. Cllr X Xxxxx. This supports the formalisation of the meeting of the Council, as opposed to any public participation and assists members of the public in identifying who is speaking.
- Explain how the minutes of the meeting can be accessed following the meeting.
- Don't rush through agenda items; be prepared to pause discussion, remind people of the agreed process and ask contributors to repeat themselves if necessary. Observe Standing Orders in the management of debate.
- Summarise each agenda item before opening discussion, clarifying the issue on which a decision which needs to be made.
- Repeat a motion for clarity before taking a vote; members should identify themselves by name and be succinct in their action to support, object or abstain.
- If the meeting AT ANY POINT is not accessible to the public due to technological failure or other means, the Chair should immediately adjourn the meeting by request to the officer managing the Zoom platform; the 'organiser'. If access cannot be restored within a reasonable period, the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair or at the next ordinary meeting of the Council.
- On ending the meeting, note the time in the usual way and ask councillors and members of the public to leave, thanking for their time and interest in attending. The organiser will then close the call.

VOTING AT MEETINGS

- The Chairman will clearly read out the motion to be voted on.
- Voting will be conducted via an alphabetical role call of Councillors.
- The clerk will unmute each councillor in turn and the Chair will ask: 'Cllr A, how do you vote?' Answer clearly SUPPORT, OBJECT, ABSTAIN.
- Each Councillor's vote will be recorded by the Clerk before the next in turn is unmuted.

- The Chairman should confirm a motion as resolved before moving on to the next agenda item.