

Supplementary Standing Orders – Virtual Meetings

(To be read in conjunction with Part 4, Section 1 – Council Procedure Rules)

Introduction

1. Different meeting arrangements are in place for the period 4 April 2020 to 7 May 2021 because of the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020, and the associated Meetings Regulations 2020, to allow formal virtual meetings.

Interpretation

2. These Standing Orders clarify the County Council's temporary legal powers to hold meetings via telephone audio conference, video conference or other electronic means to avoid convening public gatherings during the public health emergency. In any instance where these Standing Orders conflict with other Standing Orders or other sections of the Constitution, these Standing Orders prevail until 7 May 2021.

Attendance

3. All references to members being 'present' at a meeting include participating through virtual methods, including audio conferencing or video conferencing.
4. All references to Members 'attending' a meeting include participating through virtual methods, including audio conferencing or video conferencing.
5. To qualify as a formal, virtual meeting, Members must be able to hear and (where practicable) see and be heard and (where practicable) be seen by other Members in attendance at the meeting. This full requirement also extends to members of the public attending to exercise a right to speak at a meeting. All other members of the public must as a minimum be able to hear and (where practicable see) the meeting.
6. A Member in attendance through virtual methods will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for attendance contained in paragraph 5 above are not met in their case. In such circumstance the Chairman may, as he or she deems appropriate;
 - (a) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for virtual attendance for the Member or Members to be re-established; or
 - (b) count the number of Members in attendance for the purposes of the quorum and, if quorate
 - (c) continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the Member or Members. If absent members later re-join the meeting, they will be able to continue to participate, but will not be able to vote in any decision of the Regulatory Committee, or Committees or Panels drawn from the Regulatory Committee, where they have missed part of the debate on that item.
7. All references to meeting locations include an entirely virtual meeting by audio conference or video conference with no published fixed location. However, a fixed location will ordinarily be published to provide for members of the public to view a meeting on screen at that location.

8. If any Member is not able to attend a meeting during the period covered (to 7 May 2021) due to issues related to the virtual nature of the meeting, for example technical difficulties, or failure of IT equipment or services, this will be considered as an absence for a reason approved by the Council in relation to attendance requirements.

Public access

9. All formal meetings will be accessible to the public through live webcasting of the audio or video content, and through provision for a meeting to be viewed on screen at the published location, except where exempt items are being discussed.

Communications

10. References to hard copy communications such as 'in writing or, 'signing' 'can include by email or other electronic methods of communication where appropriate.

Access to documents

11. All references to the 'supply' or 'provision' of documents or 'inspection' of documents at 'County Hall' or 'council offices' will be via electronic methods such as on the County Council's website in the first instance, or via email where permissible. Where practicable, hard copies of documents by post may be available on request for those who do not have internet provision.

Conduct of meetings

12. Notwithstanding the provisions set out in these Standing Orders the conduct of the meeting will be at the discretion of the Chairman. The Chairman of a virtual meeting will manage the meeting with clear instructions and requests to participants. Members will request to speak via electronic means such as instant messaging.
13. If the Chairman speaks, any other Members shall stop speaking and will seek instruction from the Chairman.
14. Requests to raise points of order or points of personal explanation as provided for in Standing Order 22 must be communicated to the Chairman via electronic means and must be allowed as soon as practicable.
15. On any occasion where a committee resolves to go into Part II to discuss exempt or confidential business, each Member and officer taking part in the virtual meeting must ensure that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be participating (whether by hearing or seeing) in the consideration of such items, and that no person is recording the proceedings.

Interests

16. Standing Orders 62.1 and 62.2 continue to apply in that Members will have regard to the Code of Conduct in any meeting. If a Member has a pecuniary or prejudicial interest in an item, they must leave the virtual meeting for the duration of that item, after which they will be invited to re-join the meeting.

Voting

17. At a virtual meeting, unless a recorded vote is mandated or requested verbally or by electronic means in line with Standing Orders 33 (Council) or 55 (Cabinet, Committees

and Sub-Committees), the method of voting shall be at the discretion of the Chairman who may take the vote in one of the ways set out below depending on the nature of the meeting and the item:

- (a) by the affirmation of the meeting if there is no dissent [by assent]; or
- (b) by roll-call, and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting will be recorded.

18. If any dissent is indicated under method (a), the Chairman may move to (b) a roll-call vote.
19. If a vote is to be taken by roll-call the Chairman will pass to an officer who will call each Member in turn to cast their vote verbally, or by electronic methods. The Chairman will read out the result when it has been collated.
20. Details of how Members voted will not be minuted unless a recorded vote was requested. See also provisions in Standing Order 6(c) above for Regulatory Committees and Panels.

Questions from members of the public

21. Provision for written questions from members of the public at Council meetings continues to apply in line with Standing Order 42. Supplementary verbal questions from members of the public will not be taken at virtual Council meetings

Petitions

22. A Member wishing to present a petition to the Chairman of the Council as set out in Standing Order 40.1 may do this via an alternative method of communication such as email.
23. Provision for a petitioner to address the Cabinet, relevant Cabinet member or Committee on the subject matter of a petition referred by the Chairman will apply where practicable but shall be at the Chairman or Lead Member's discretion. As the meetings will be held virtually, written submissions to be read out at the relevant meeting will also be requested from designated speakers in advance of the meeting in case of technical issues.

Public representations at Planning Committee

24. Provision for public speaking at the Planning Committee continues to apply as set out in part 4 of the Constitution, and will continue to be in accordance with the Council's [policy on Speaking at Planning Committee](#). However, as the meetings will be held virtually, written submissions to be read out at the Committee meeting will be requested from designated speakers in advance of the meeting. There will though be the option to speak to the Committee in person using telephone or video conferencing where this is practicable.

General

25. In so far as legally permissible, failure to comply with the requirements of these Standing Orders does not invalidate the decisions of the Council, Committee or body in question.