

PROCEDURE RULES FOR THE REGULATION OF PROCEEDINGS – CABINET AND COMMITTEES

PROCEDURE RULE No. 30

REMOTE MEETINGS

30.1 The [Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels \(Coronavirus\) \(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) make provision for remote attendance at, and remote access to, council meetings held on or before 7 May 2021.

30.2 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.

30.3 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.

30.4 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 possible, see and be seen by) other councillors and members of the public attending remotely or in person.

30.5 For the purposes of maintaining public health and compliance with the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#), and since the venue for remote meetings is digital rather than physical, there will be no designated council premises used as the venue for such meetings. The only circumstances in which it might be necessary or appropriate for a member to attend County Hall for a remote meeting is where a chairman requires the support of an officer and it is not reasonably possible for them to chair the meeting from home. All other members should attend such meetings remotely, as there is no 'reasonable excuse' under the regulations for them to leave home to attend County Hall, nor is gathering in County Hall 'essential for work purposes'.

30.6 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 this procedure rule takes precedence over other procedure rules in relation to the governance of remote meetings.

Process

30.7 The council facilitates remote attendance and access to its meetings through the medium of Microsoft Teams, which enables the following to take place:

- (a) Contributions to be received from people using a wide variety of devices, not all of whom are on the council network.
- (b) Being accessible to both participants and members of the public who are not taking an active role but just observing.
- (c) Presentations and documents (maps, plans, etc) to be displayed and spoken to.

30.8 Before the meeting, any document to be referred to during the meeting should be shared with participants and published (where appropriate) in advance on the council's website, ensuring that every page and slide is numbered, wherever possible.

30.9 Before the meeting, all participants should be made aware of the following etiquette:

- (a) Join the meeting promptly to avoid unnecessary interruptions.
- (b) Mute microphones when not talking.
- (c) Switch off cameras when not speaking (to save bandwidth).
- (d) Indicate a wish to speak by using the chat function.
- (e) Only speak when invited to by the chairman.
- (f) Anyone speaking should state their name before making a comment.
- (g) If referring to a specific page or slide, mention the page or slide number.

30.10 The chairman and the clerk may:

- (a) Pause (adjourn) the meeting by taking down the stream (live feed) from public viewing and then resume it when needed.
- (b) Switch on each active participant's microphone when they are invited to speak and switch them off afterwards.
- (c) Mute someone speaking at any time.
- (d) Mute everyone speaking except themselves at any time.
- (e) Allocate different levels of access to people logging in (based on upon whether they are a councillor, an officer, a member of the public who has registered to speak or just an observer of the meeting).
- (f) Switch some active participants and the observers off, so they are paused and have neither 'live' visual or audio feed whilst the committee deliberates in private or an officer present gives the committee advice. By taking down the live feed content from the public and just displaying a holding slide, decision makers may hold a separate meeting on Teams. The live stream can then be resumed when needed.

30.11 In the event of any apparent failure of the video, telephone or conferencing connection, the chairman shall immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:

- (a) if it is, then the business of the meeting shall continue; or
- (b) if there is no quorum, then the meeting shall be adjourned for a short period specified by the chairman, to allow the connection to be re-established.

30.12 Should any aspect of a member's remote participation fail, the chairman may call a short adjournment to determine whether the connection can quickly be re-established,

either by video technology or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting shall continue to deal with the business whilst this happens, providing it remains quorate and the public are able to hear.

30.13 In the event of connection failure, the remote members will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure. If the connection cannot be re-established to those members before the end of the meeting, then the presumption will be that the meeting shall continue to deal with the items without them. If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote members will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.

30.14 If a connection to a member is lost during a regulatory committee meeting, the chairman shall stop the meeting to enable the connection to be restored. If the connection cannot be restored within a reasonable time, the meeting shall proceed (subject to being quorate), but the member who was disconnected will not be able to vote on the matter under discussion as they would not have heard all the facts.

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

Questions by members of the public

30.16 Only written questions from the public, submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 8.12, may be considered at remote meetings.

Voting

30.17 Named voting will be used to record votes at remote meetings.

30.18 To record a vote, the clerk will perform a roll-call of all members present and ask them to state their voting intention (For, Against or Abstain). These will then be counted and recorded. At the conclusion of the voting the chairman shall announce the numbers of votes cast for, against and abstentions and announce whether the motion has been passed or lost.

Access to information

30.19 The requirement to ensure meetings are open to the public includes access by remote means, including video conferencing, live webcast and live interactive streaming. 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.

30.20 Any requirements for the authority to ensure publication, posting or making available a document for inspection at offices of the council include publication on the council's website.