

Virtual Meeting Policy

1. Introduction

The Broadclyst Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate and has developed this policy to assist Chairmen, Councillors, and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist people to engage in debate and decision making. The policy is to be delivered within 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020' and that are currently enacted for meeting on and up to 7 May 2021.

2. Publishing the agenda and providing documents

Councillors are to be summonsed as per regulation with the agenda and documents being placed on the Council's website. No agendas will be published on physical noticeboards. Any person unable to access the Council's website must contact the Council and request an electronic copy of the agenda and documents to be forwarded as appropriate. In cases that documents originate from a third-party, electronic links will be provided where available.

3. Virtual Meeting 'platform'

The Broadclyst Parish Council will utilise Microsoft Teams to provide video communications [when possible](#). Teams enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems.

The Clerk to the Council will create the Teams meeting and publish the link with the agenda.

4. Standing Orders

Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a place.

5. Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements

a. Discussions

This section applies if members are experiencing good connectivity. In the case of poor connectivity see 5c.

During the meeting all persons other than members will be muted. During the public participation period members of the public will be [asked by the Chairman if they wish to speak](#). Their microphone will then be unmuted and they can address the meeting. Following the conclusion of their address the microphone will be muted.

During the meeting, Members and Officers will raise their hand [or use the chat function](#) to indicate to the Chairman that they wish to speak on an agenda item.

All members attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise and mute their own microphones, except when speaking, if necessary, to negate interference with the meeting.

b. Voting

All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands [or, where this is not possible, by using another clear and transparent method. The Chairman will read back the result of each vote to confirm it is correct before moving on.](#)

c. Poor connectivity

In the case of poor connectivity, the Chairman will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene.

In the case of video not being available for some or all of members attending, the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for councillor views and votes on individual agenda items.

d. Attendance

If a member is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be minuted. If 'drop outs' result in the meeting becoming inquorate members will endeavour to re-join for a period of 15 minutes. After 15 minutes if the meeting is still inquorate, the Chairman will suspend the meeting and reconvene at a later time and date subject to the statutory days of notice. Members will be telephoned to advise of the suspension.

e. Telephone attendance

Persons wishing to attend by telephone are advised to contact the Clerk in advance in order that processes can be put in place to enable appropriate engagement.

6. Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders apply with regard to Conduct at Meetings and all attendees are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people experience with regard to the operation of technology.

Due attention is given to the matters being discussed and multi-tasking e.g. by reading emails or watching TV is eliminated.

Behaviour that is contrary to the intended outcomes of the meeting will be dealt with at the discretion of the Chairman. For a member of the public or press this may result in them being dismissed from the Teams meeting.

7. Declaration of Interests

A councillor that has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the waiting room. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made the councillor will be returned to the meeting

8. Public Participation

The Clerk will read any pre-submitted addresses from the press and public.

9. Confidential Matters

On conclusion of the non-confidential matters on an agenda the meeting will be suspended to allow the Chairman to remove all members of press and public from the meeting.

Remote attendees must be aware of their surroundings. Confidentiality and sensitivity of information must be considered, and conversations must not be conducted in a place where they will be overheard.

Confirmation of confidentiality should be declared at each meeting.

10. Recording

Teams meetings will be recorded for Minutes purposes. These recordings will be deleted in accordance with Standing Orders.

11. Information

The chat view box on the Teams meeting can be utilised by Councillors wishing to raise a question. It can also provide additional information to attendees, depending of the specific meeting.

Policy adopted 4th May 2020; amended for added voting clarity 1st June 2020.

Chairman:

Clerk:

For further information see The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>