

LITTLE DOWNHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Remote Meeting Policy
May 2020

1. Introduction

Little Downham Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting remotely in times when face-to-face meetings are not permitted or appropriate. This policy has been produced to assist the Chairman, councillors and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from face-to-face meeting and to assist people in debate and decision making. This policy is delivered within 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, S78' and are currently enacted for meetings on and up to 7 May 2021.

2. Publishing the agenda and providing documents

Councillors are summoned to the meeting as per regulations with the agenda and documents being emailed to Councillors and placed on the Parish Council's website: www.littledownham.net. Until further notice, no agendas will be published on the Parish Council notice boards. In cases where documents originate from a third-party, electronic links will be provided where available.

3. Remote Meeting 'platform'

Little Downham Parish Council will utilise video platforms such as Zoom, Skype, or other preferable software, to provide video communications that enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems.

In preparation for the meeting the Clerk to the Council will publish via the summons:

- The meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

Members will be put into a waiting room following signing into the meeting and the host will enable them to join the meeting. Conditions apply to all attendees when attending remote meetings:

- To hear and where practicable be heard by all others attending;
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All of the above conditions must be satisfied. These conditions allow members to join via a video link system or by telephone so long as every member can be heard by every other member and the public. All members, clerk and other staff, and any members of the public will be in attendance for the purposes of the 2020 Regulations if they are in remote attendance. The provisions in Regulation 5 of the above will apply notwithstanding any standing orders or rules to the contrary.

4. Standing Orders

Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in face-to-face meetings. Standing Order 15b will be suspended to allow the Proper Officer to call a remote meeting and issue the agenda and accompanying documents via email.

5. Specific Remote Meeting Arrangements

a. Discussions

During the meeting all persons other than members will be muted. During the public participation period members of the public will be required to 'enable video' in order for them to be visible to the Chairman and will raise their hand to indicate that 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 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, to negate interference with the meeting.

b. Voting

All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands.

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 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, if available.

6. Remote Meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders and Code of Conduct will 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.

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 Zoom 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

Confidential matters relating to staff or councillors will not be dealt with via a virtual meeting. Confidential matters on the agenda will be dealt with at the end of the meeting following the resolution to exclude public and press.

Policy adopted 2020

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>