



STOGURSEY PARISH COUNCIL

VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

ADOPTED: 13 May 2020

1.0 Introduction

1.1 On 4 April 2020 the government introduced The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 to allow local councils to meet remotely. This protocol sets out how Stogursey Parish Council will continue to operate during the pandemic.

1.2 Stogursey Parish Council is operating on the Zoom platform which supports group conference and/or video calling.

1.3 The Parish Council is paying for a monthly subscription and informed all councillors of how to access the platform. Councillors have been asked to contact the Clerk if they have any technical issues in relation to access, whether that be hardware or the need for headphones.

1.4 Councillors have been asked to contact the Clerk if they have any technical issues in relation to access (headphones, microphones or webcam).

2.0 Planning and Preparation

2.1 The Parish Clerk will arrange the meetings and provide the link to the meetings.

2.2 The meeting will be advertised in the normal manner (including, if the situation permits on the public noticeboards) and an agenda will be issued within the normal time frames.

2.3 The public are invited to observe the meeting. If they have a question to raise they have been asked to submit it in advance of the meeting.

2.4 The normal required standards of behaviour and discussion must be applied in the same manner of a face to face meeting. Please also be patient with those who are less experienced in this platform. Please also respect confidentiality and do not breach the code of conduct, and do not make enquiries about private matters, health, home etc.

2.5 Apologies need to be given in the normal manner. Councillors will be asked to inform the Chairman of any Declaration of Interest relevant to the business on the Agenda.

2.6 If a councillor is deemed to have an interest in a matter and would normally leave a physical meeting, then they will be invited to leave and will be placed in the waiting room temporarily by the host, after which they will be returned to the meeting by the host.

2.7 Minutes will be taken from the meetings and circulated to councillors in the normal manner after the meeting. They will be placed displayed on the website and signed when the council finally meets face to face.

2.8 There might be technical issues during the meeting and the Clerk might have to ask for clarification, for dialogue to be repeated in order to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

2.9 In the event that the communication link is lost or of any other apparent failure of the connection, the Chair should immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:

2.9.1 if it is, then the business of the meeting will continue, those who dropped out should attempt to reconnect or re-join the meeting in another way. The minutes shall show Councillors as having “left” and “re-joined” the meeting

2.9.2 if there is a more general failure or no quorum, then the meeting shall adjourn for a period of ten minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established. If this is not possible the meeting shall be considered to have been adjourned and a further meeting shall be arranged.

3.0 Process to host meetings for Councillors

3.1 The Clerk will host the meeting and set up the meeting parameters. An email invitation will be sent to Councillors from the Clerk. Councillors need to click on the link and enter the meeting ID number and the password. Councillors will also be given the telephone number to enable access to the meeting by telephone.

3.2 Before entering the meeting councillors should ensure that they are in a private place where there is little background interference/noise/people. It is difficult to hear on occasions and some might wish to use a headset with a microphone. If using a mobile device, attendees should not wander about as this can be distracting for other participants.

3.3 Councillors are asked to use “Cllr (Smith)” as their sign in name for the benefit of the members of the public present.

3.4 On entering the meeting, participants will be placed in a waiting room. The Clerk allows access and members will join with their microphone muted. When the Clerk has seen the participant and can verify you, then you will be unmuted.

3.5 A check will be carried out to establish that everyone can be heard, but then all Councillors other than the Chairman and the Clerk will be muted. If the Chairman invites someone to speak they can be unmuted. Councillors should not interrupt others. If you wish to speak during the meeting, please raise your hand to gain the attention of the Clerk. When you speak, please state your name first for the benefit of those who might not be able to see others.

3.6 The meeting will still be chaired in the normal manner. The Clerk might have a greater input to guide the meeting to the next item, as some will not have access to an agenda for the duration of the meeting (if they do not have a printer).

3.7 If there is to be a vote, councillors should raise their hand until asked to put it down. If you do not have a video facility, you will be asked to confirm your vote verbally. Please state clearly whether you are in favour, against or abstaining.

3.8 If you struggle with hearing during the meeting, please use the chat box to type a message which will be seen by the Clerk and/or Chair.

3.9 If people speak over others or if there is a time delay and matters are not heard, the Clerk will ask for people to repeat, and to speak in turn. All councillors will be given the text number of the parish clerk and can send a message during the meeting if they are experiencing difficulties

4.0 Public Participation

4.1 The public are invited to observe the meeting. If they have a question to raise they have been asked to submit it in advance of the meeting. Such representations may either be read out by the Clerk, or the Chair may ask the member of the public to speak. A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chairman may direct that a written or oral response be given at a later date.

4.2 When the agenda is produced it will be displayed on the website with details of how to obtain a link to the meeting and details of how to submit a question. They will be asked to check the link works in advance of the meeting.

4.3 On arrival at the meeting they will be held in a waiting room, and admitted in accordance with the list held by the clerk. This is to restrict the potential risk of disruption or inappropriate behaviour. Members of the public will be muted by default and the Chairman will only unmute individuals who are invited to speak.

4.4 Where the Chairman allows members of the public to speak in a public session, public participation shall not exceed 15 minutes in total and a member of the public shall not speak for more than three minutes and may speak once only unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting.

4.5 Other than during any public session as in 4.4 above, members of the public will remain muted throughout. Any person obstructing the meeting or otherwise behaving improperly or offensively shall be asked to stop or removed to the waiting room for part or all of the remainder of the meeting.

4.6 Where the Council resolves to exclude the public from part or all of a meeting, the Chairman will make a statement to explain reasons for the public's exclusion. Where possible this part of the meeting will be held last at the end of the meeting on conclusion of the public business. All members of the public will be removed to the waiting room and will be reconnected if there is further public business to transact.