

High Easter Parish Council

Virtual Meeting Policy

1) Introduction

Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 allows the relevant national authority to make regulations providing for virtual meetings in local authorities, including county, district and parish councils.

As a result the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations") came into effect on 4th April 2020. These allow local authorities to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May 2021. Local authorities are free to select which platform they use to host their meetings.

2) Standing Orders

The Standing Orders of the Parish Council will continue to apply and will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a physical meeting place.

3) Publishing the agenda and providing documents

The agenda for each meeting will include any reports, relevant background papers and together with previous minutes, can be viewed on the Parish Council section of the village website.

<https://e-voice.org.uk/higheaster/parish-council/agenda-and-minutes-2/year-2020/>

For the purposes of publication of the agenda as required by the Standing Orders to be in a 'conspicuous place', the website shall be the 'conspicuous place'. If possible, the agenda will continue to be published on the two physical noticeboards along The Street.

4) Virtual Meeting 'platform'

High Easter Parish Council meetings will be hosted on the Zoom platform and the details enabling members of the public to access the meeting and ask questions (under the public speaking time) will be given for each meeting as part of the agenda as follows,

- The zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

Persons wishing to join by telephone are required to contact the Clerk for details.

5) Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements

The meeting will be 'hosted' by the Clerk

For persons joining with video you are asked to 'enable video' in order for you to be visible to the meeting, in exactly the same way you would be if you were physically attending a meeting under normal circumstances.

If connectivity issues prevent you from switching on your video, please inform the meeting and ensure your name is shown on screen to allow the Chairman and Cllrs to engage appropriately.

6) Discussions

For persons joining with video. During the meeting all persons will be asked to mute their microphones in order to minimise the disturbance caused by background noise. It will be the persons responsibility to unmute their microphone if they wish to speak.

During the public participation period, if members of the public wish to speak and have notified the Clerk in advance they will be directed to speak by the Chairman. If a person wishes to speak and has not notified the Clerk in advance, they will be required to raise their hand to indicate they wish to speak. The Chairman will then invite them to address the meeting.

During the meeting Cllrs and the Clerk will raise their hand to indicate to the Chairman that they wish to speak on an agenda item.

a) Voting

Voting will be undertaken by a show of hands. In the event of Cllrs connecting to the meeting without video, or by telephone, the Chairman may decide to take a roll call.

b) 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 Cllrs attending, the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for Cllr views on individual agenda items.

c) Attendance

If a Cllr is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be noted. If 'dropouts' result in the meeting becoming inquorate, Cllrs 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.

7) 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.

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 removed from the Zoom meeting.

8) Declaration of Interests

A Cllr that has declared an interest requiring him/her to leave the meeting will be placed in the waiting room. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made, the Cllr will be re-admitted to the meeting

9) Confidential Matters

Confidential matters (as defined in The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960) will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting that is available to Cllrs only.

Policy adopted: 6 July 2020

Date for Review: May 2021