

ADDENDUM TO ALKHAM PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS.

27. General

This Protocol and Procedures should be read in conjunction with the Council's standing orders.

Introduction

This Protocol sets out the procedure and guidance for the conduct of remote meeting of the council, and its various Committees, held under the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (the "2020 Regulations".)

The Regulations made under s78 of Coronavirus Act 2020 apply and where there is a conflict between these and any other adopted standing orders or legislation, these Remote Meetings Procedures take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.

They apply until 7 May 2021.

1.0 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be postponed until May 2021

2.0 Notice of Meetings

- 2.1 The meetings schedule and times agreed by council may be changed. Re-arranged meeting dates and times will be agreed with Committee Chairs and Members notified accordingly.
- 2.2 The proper officer will give the requisite notice to the public of the time of a meeting, and the agenda, together with details of how to join the meeting will be available on the council's website.
- 2.3 Members will be notified of a remote meeting by email and all meeting papers will be sent to members by post and available by electronic means as appropriate. Members of the public may access agenda papers and minutes, through the council's website.
- 2.4 The 'place' at which the meeting is held will be shown as 'online only' on the agenda summons. Meetings will be accessed via an email invitation in advance of the meeting.

3.0 Access to Remote Meetings

- 3.1 Members and members of the press and public will need to use video conferencing facilities provided by the council to attend a meeting remotely.
- 3.2 If this is not possible, attendance may be by telephone, but this should only be used by Members where video conferencing is not practicable.
- 3.4 If technology fails for a remote meeting, and the meeting is no longer open to the public, any decisions made could be challenged as unlawful.
- 3.5 It is important to note that the public accessing the meeting by remote means, as

described here, is different from the public attending to exercise a right to speak. A technological failure removing the ability for the public to access the meeting by remote means renders the whole meeting incapable of proceeding (as described above).

- 3.6 When member of the public notifies the Parish Council that they wish to attend they should submit their statement/question in written form to the Parish Council before the meeting. Members of the public can also be invited to speak, at the Chair's discretion, if they have not submitted a written statement.

Should there be a failure of the technology and they are unable to speak at the meeting or should they fail to log or dial into the meeting their statement will be read out by the Clerk instead. The item can then proceed.

- 3.7 If a member of public submits a question and there is a failure of the technology at the meeting the Clerk or the Chairman will read out the question or a summary of the question. The item can then proceed

4.0 Management of the Meeting

- 4.1 Any Member participating in a meeting remotely, must when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and if possible seen) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and if possible see) those other Members participating.

- 4.2 In addition, a remote participant must be able to be heard by, and in turn hear any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting and who exercise a right to speak at the meeting.

- 4.3 The Chair will confirm at the outset of the meeting that they can see and hear all participating Members. Any Member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset that they can see and hear the proceedings and the other participants. This will be done by means of a roll call of Members carried out by the Clerk, who will record attendance.

- 4.4 The normal quorum requirements for meetings as set out in the council's Constitution will also apply to a remote meeting. As set out in standing orders quorum is one third of Members but not less than five.

- 4.5 Should any aspect of an individual Member's remote participation fail the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes or so 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 should continue to deal with the business whilst this happens, providing the meeting remains quorate and the public are able to hear. If the meeting is not quorate without the Member whose connection has failed, then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next meeting. Standing orders do not permit substitution part way through a meeting.

- 4.6 If the Chair is made aware that the meeting is not accessible to the public through remote means, due to any technological or other failure of provision, then the Chair shall adjourn the meeting immediately. If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period (being 10-15 minutes), then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next meeting.

- 4.7 In the event of connection failure, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure and if the connection cannot be re-established to those Member(s) before the end of the meeting, then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item/s.
- 4.8 If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment. The Member who was disconnected will not however be able to vote on the matter under discussion as they would not have heard all the debate.

5.0 Remote Attendance of the Public

- 5.1 Members of the public attending a meeting remotely must, when they are speaking be able to be heard (and ideally be seen) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and ideally see) those other Members participating and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
- 5.2 Advance notification from members of the public wishing to attend a meeting will be required by emailing clerk@alkhamparishcouncil.org.uk for those items of business, an invitation to participate in the remote technology can then be sent out in advance.
- 5.3 The Parish Clerk will be able to mute the member of the public once they have spoken, and remove them from the remote meeting on the instruction of the Chair, in order to maintain the good administration of the meeting or to retain order.
- 5.4 A breakdown of the technology should not disadvantage the member of the public in remote attendance wherever possible. Failure of the technology affecting members of the public attending to exercise a right to speak will be dealt with as detailed in section 3 above. A technological failure removing the ability for the public to access the meeting by remote means renders the whole meeting incapable of proceeding (as described above).

6.0 Meeting Procedures

- 6.1 The Clerk will act as meeting facilitator to control the technology and administer the public and Member interaction on the instruction of the Chair.
- 6.2 It would assist the meeting if Members wishing to speak on an item could indicate their wish to speak to the Chair and the Clerk in advance of the start of the meeting where possible.
- 6.3 The Chair will follow the rules set out in the Standing Orders when determining who may speak, as well as the order and priority of speakers and the content and length of speeches in the normal way.
- 6.4 The Chair, at the beginning of the meeting, will explain the protocol for member and public participation and the rules of debate. The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.

Meeting Etiquette

- 6.5 Members are asked to join the meeting no later than fifteen minutes before the start to allow themselves and the meetings the opportunity to test the equipment
- 6.6 Any camera (video-feed) should show a non-descript background or, where possible, a virtual background and Members should be careful to not allow

exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video-feed.

- 6.7 Members should type their name on joining the meeting in full, eg, "Cllr John Smith".
- 6.8 All Members to have their microphones muted when not talking to prevent interference and background noise.
- 6.9 Rather than raising one's hand or rising to be recognised or to speak, Members should use the chat facility to indicate to the Chair that they wish to speak. Members will unmute their microphone when the Chair invites them to speak and state their name before making a comment
- 6.10 The chat facility must not be used for private conversations between Members during the meeting.
- 6.11 Members should only speak when invited to by the Chair
- 6.12 Only one person may speak at any one time
- 6.13 When referring to a specific report, Members should mention the report, page, so that all Members have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

6.14 Where members of the public are exercising speaking rights at the meeting via remote attendance, the Chair will as part of their introduction explain the procedure for their participation which will reflect those relevant elements of the above. If members of the public do not adhere to this procedure, then the Chair shall give them due warning of the power to remove them from the meetings. If the interruption continues then the Chair may ask the meeting facilitator to mute them or remove them from the meeting.

Voting

- 6.15 When the Chair is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate and (if the rules of the meeting require) there is a proposer and seconder for the item being discussed the Chair will progress to the vote by the following method.
- 6.16 The Chair will call out the name of each Member present with Members stating 'for', 'against' or 'abstain' to indicate their vote when their name is called. The Clerk will then clearly state the result of the vote.
- 6.17 Details of how Members voted will not be minuted unless a Recorded Vote is called. Where a Recorded Vote is requested the Chair will ask Members in turn to signify verbally whether or not they support that request.
- 6.18 Whilst every attempt will be made to ensure the security of meetings, we cannot rule out the possibility that an individual might find a way to hack into and disrupt a meeting. In the event that this happens the Chair should adjourn the meeting

7.0 Declaration of Interests

- 7.1 Any Member participating in a remote meeting who declares a disclosable pecuniary interest, or other declarable interest, in any item of business that would normally require them to leave the room, must also leave the remote meeting. Their departure will be confirmed by the Clerk, who will invite the relevant Member by invite or email link, to re-join the meeting at the appropriate time.

8.0 Exclusion of Public and Press

- 8.1** Council meetings are not open to the public when confidential, or “exempt” issues (as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) are under consideration. Where possible such items will be considered once all ‘open’ items have been considered. Once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting the Clerk will close the publicly accessible remote meeting and circulate a new link to meeting to be held in exempt session.
- 8.2** Each Member and officer in remote attendance must ensure and verbally declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be hearing or seeing consideration of such items and/or recording the proceedings.
- 8.3** Any Member in remote attendance who failed to disclose that there were in fact persons present who were not so entitled would be in breach of the Members’ Code of Conduct.

9.0 Recording of Meetings

- 9.1** All meetings may be recorded by the council.