



SHEPTON MALLET TOWN COUNCIL

VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

Policy Reference Number: 1933

AUTHOR: Town Clerk

RESPONSIBILITY: Policy and Resources Committee

GRADE: Three – Low

DATE ADOPTED: 16th April 2020

REVIEW DATE: Every 3 years - 2022

AMENDMENTS:

1.0 Introduction

1.1.1 On 4th 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 Shepton Mallet will continue to operate during the pandemic.

1.2 Shepton Mallet Town Council is operating on the Zoom platform.

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

2.0 Planning and Preparation

2.1 The meeting will be advertised in the normal manner (other than on the public noticeboard) and an agenda will be issued within the normal time frames.

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

2.3 Apologies need to be given in the normal manner.

2.4 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.

2.5 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 matter, health, home etc.

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 receive a text message (or asked to wait in the waiting room) when they can be invited back into the meeting.

2.7 There might be technical issues during the meeting and the Town 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.

3.0 Process to host meetings for Councillors

3.1 The Town Clerk will host the meeting and set up the meeting perimeters. An email invitation will be sent to councillors from the Town Clerk. They need to click on the link and enter the meeting ID number and the password.

3.2 Before entering the meeting please ensure that you 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.

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

3.4 A check will be done to establish that you 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. Please do not interrupt others. If you wish to speak during the meeting, please raise your hand for the attention of the Clerk. When you speak please state your name as you speak for the benefit of those who might not be able to see you.

3.5 The meeting will still be chaired in the normal manner. The Town 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).

3.6 If there is to be a vote, please raise your hand until asked to put your hand down.

3.7 If you struggle with hearing during the meeting, please use the chat box to type a message which will be seen by the Town Clerk.

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

4.0 Public Participation

4.1 When the agenda is produced it will invite the public to contact the Town Clerk by email if they wish to be invited to the meeting. They will be sent an agenda and on the day of the meeting will be sent a link to the meeting, with the meeting ID number and password.

4.2 They will be asked to check this link works in advance of the meeting. On arrival at the meeting they will be held in a waiting room and let in against a list of names held by the Town Clerk. This is to avoid the entry of unknowns, as experienced in recent weeks at other public meeting where meetings have been disrupted with inappropriate displays of behaviour.

4.3 If the public wish to ask any specific questions they will need to have informed the Town Clerk of this 24 hours before the start of the meeting, by phone or email.

Charlotte Starkie
Town Clerk
16th April 2020