

**Coffinswell Parish Council**

**Virtual Meeting Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 21 May 2020.

The next date for review is not yet agreed due to the regulations mentioned in this policy are currently enacted up to 07 May 2021.

This policy is on hold pending Government Legislation – June 2021.

Review date 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022.

### **1. Introduction**

Coffinswell Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate. This policy has been developed to assist the Chairman, councillors and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist people to engage in debate and decision making. The policy is to be delivered within 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020' currently enacted up to 07 May 2021.

### **2. Publishing the agenda and receiving additional documentation**

Councillors will be summoned as per regulation with an agenda and documents being sent via email as well as being placed on the Council's website. No agendas will be published on physical noticeboards. In cases where documents originate from a third-party, electronic links will be provided where available. Teignbridge District Council will be notified of when the parish council intends to hold a virtual meeting.

### **3. Virtual Meeting Platform**

Coffinswell Parish Council will utilise Zoom to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems. In preparation for the meeting the clerk will publish the following information, via the summons:

- The Zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

There is also the option for meetings to be accessed via telephone.

### **4. Standing Orders**

Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a meeting. This Policy is a temporary appendix to the Council's Standing Orders.

### **5. Specific Virtual Meeting Requirements**

Discussions

*This section applies if members are experiencing good connectivity. In the case of poor connectivity see 5b.* During the meeting, all attendees 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 are asked to raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. Their microphone will then be un-muted 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. The Chairman will ask members accessing the meeting via telephone if they wish to speak.

All members attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise and mute their own microphones, except when speaking, if necessary, to negate interference with the meeting.

Councillors are asked to be considerate of one other and not speak over one another.

a. Voting

All voting will be undertaken by casting votes verbally.

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 of members attending, the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for councillor views on individual agenda items.

c. 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 date, subject to statutory meeting notice requirement. Members will be telephoned to advise of the suspension.

d. Telephone attendance

Telephone numbers to dial into the meeting will be published on the council's website. Alternatively, the clerk can be contacted to obtain this information.

## **6. Virtual Meeting Etiquette**

The council's 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 dismissed from the Zoom meeting.

## **7. Declarations of Interests**

A councillor who 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. Any members of the public wishing to speak, will be asked to do so at the relevant section of the meeting.

## **9. Confidential Matters**

Confidential matters will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting, available to members only. On conclusion of the non-confidential matters on an agenda the meeting will be suspended for members to re-join using the confidential zoom meeting link that will have been provided to members only.

## **10. Recording of meetings**

Zoom meetings will be recorded to aid the clerk's minutes and can be made available to members, the press and members of the public.

## **11. Other Zoom functions**

The chat box will be disabled for meetings, to offer enhanced security.  
Screen sharing will be disabled for all attendees other than the clerk, who may use this function at times.

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>

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Reviewed June 2021 by Cllr A Parkes.