

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

Background

On 2 April, the government published The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. These regulations come into force on 4 April.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has launched a legal briefing note on its interpretation of the regulations and practical guidance for local councils on how to hold effective remote council meetings.

In general, Council is advised to try and keep to its usual approach to meetings and stick to its standing orders as much as possible. The council should remember this is a usual council meeting.

The following guidelines have been produced to enable the meeting to run as smoothly as possible by allowing discussions and voting to take place with participation by all members of the council and interested members of the public.

Protocol

1. Prior to the online meeting commencing:

- Read the agenda and come prepared
- Ensure all background papers are to hand
- Do not work on other tasks (like checking email) during the virtual meeting
- Turn off all notifications and make sure your mobile phone is on silent
- Try and ensure that you are in a quiet area free from unnecessary distractions
- Prior to the meeting please test all technology (camera/video and Wi-Fi)

2. During online meetings:

- All to ensure that they have their cameras switched on
- Chair to introduce everyone at the start of the meeting
- Chair to direct the flow of conversation –
 - Everyone will have a chance to contribute
 - Do not interrupt other people when they're speaking
 - Do not or attempt to speak over them
- All microphones are to be muted whilst others speak
- The Chair will call on someone to speak when they indicate that they wish to contribute which will be by raising their hand
- Do not commence to speak until the Chair asks for your contribution

- Speak clearly and concisely - enunciating your words gets around any muffled microphones or poor-sounding speakers

3. Voting during online meetings:

- As all will be joining via video, voting will be by raising hands to vote as in a physical meeting
- The Chair will read back the proposal tabled so that everyone is sure as to the matter upon which they are being asked to vote
- The Clerk will read back the votes of the council so that everyone is sure their vote has been recorded correctly
- The Clerk will ensure that every vote, whether visually or by telephone, is clear and unambiguous and so recorded

4. After the meeting:

- Minute taking will be done as usual with the clerk seeking clarity at any point, should it be needed
- The minutes will be agreed at the next meeting and will be retrospectively signed at the next face-to-face meeting.
- A review will be undertaken on the effectiveness of the remote council meeting with amendments to the Protocol where necessary

Victoria S Waples

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Proper Officer to the Council
16.04.2020

