



HEATH & HOLMEWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

Virtual meeting policy

1. Introduction

Heath & Holmewood Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually when a physical meeting is not appropriate. This policy is to assist Chairs, councillors, and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist residents and members of the public 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' and that are currently enacted and active on and up to 7 May 2021.

2. Publishing the agenda and providing documents

Councillors are to be summoned as per regulations with the agenda and documents being placed on the parish council's website. The agenda will be published on at least one noticeboard if this is possible given current UK Government advice. Any person unable to access the Council's website can request a copy of the agenda by email or telephoning the clerk -

clerk@heathandholmewood-pc.gov.uk – 01246 857261

3. Virtual Meeting 'platform'

Heath & Holmewood will use Zoom to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems.

Prior to the meeting the Clerk to the Council will publish

- The zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

4. Standing Orders

Standing Orders will continue to be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a physical meeting place.

5. Public Participation

Whenever possible, all attendees will be required to 'enable video' for them to be visible to the Chair.

The clerk will read any pre submitted questions from the press and public. Questions will be taken. It is impossible to hear if everyone speaks at once. To facilitate this please use the 'reactions' button at the bottom of the Zoom screen and raise your virtual hand if you'd like to speak.

Please note, that at the conclusion of public participation, public are welcome to remain in the meeting, however video should remain enabled and microphones will be muted, as no further public engagement can take place.

6. Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements

a. Discussions

This section applies if members are experiencing good connectivity. In the case of poor connectivity see 6c.

During the meeting, all members, and officers other than the Chair and clerk will be muted.

Their microphone will be unmuted, 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 (virtual hand) to indicate to the Chair that they wish to speak on an agenda item.

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.

b. Voting

Voting will be undertaken by a show of hands. In the event of members connection to the meeting via telephone, the Chairman may decide to take a roll call.

c. Poor connectivity

In the case of poor connectivity, the Chairman will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene.

d. Attendance

If a member is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be noted. If 'dropouts' 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 time and date subject to the statutory days of notice.

Members will be telephoned/emailed to advise of the suspension.

e. Telephone attendance

Persons wishing to attend by telephone are advised to contact the Clerk in advance in order that processes can be put in place to enable appropriate engagement.

7. Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders apply regarding 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 councillor that 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

9. Confidential Matters

Confidential matters will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting that is 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

Currently, Heath & Holmewood Parish Council do not record meetings. Should the need arise participants will be made aware that recording is in process.

11. Information

The chat box on the Zoom meeting will be disabled for all Committee and Council meetings.

Approved policy as agreed at the parish council meeting held on 13th January 2021.

Review date – May 2021

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>