

Wisborough Green Parish Council

Virtual Meeting Policy

1. Introduction

Wisborough Green Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting online in times when a physical meeting is not appropriate. This policy has been developed to assist Chairmen, Councillors and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist engagement, debate and decision making. The policy is to be delivered within 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020' that are currently enacted for meetings on and up to 7 May 2021.

2. Publishing the agenda and providing documents

Councillors are to be summonsed to the meeting with the circulation by email of the agenda and any supporting documents. The agenda will also be published on the Council's website and as the Clerk lives in the village, agendas will also be placed on the village noticeboards.

3. Online Meeting Platform

Wisborough Green Parish Council will utilise Zoom or equivalent online meeting tool. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems.

In preparation for the meeting the Clerk to the Council will publish via the summons:

- The zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

4. Standing Orders

Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting as if it were being held in person at the Village Hall.

5. Specific Online Meeting Arrangements

a. Discussions

This section applies if members are experiencing good connectivity. In the case of poor connectivity see 5c.

During the meeting all persons, 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 will raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. Their microphone will then be unmuted and they

can address the meeting. Following the conclusion of their address, and any subsequent discussion, their 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 or use the Zoom 'reaction' facility (if they do not have camera facility).

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

b. Voting

All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands.

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

d. Attendance

If a member is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be minuted. If 'drop outs' result in the meeting becoming inquorate, the affected members will endeavour to re-join for a period of 15 minutes. If, after 15 minutes, 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 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.

6. Online Meeting Etiquette

Normal 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, in accordance with Standing Orders for conduct of meetings. For a member of the public or press this may result in them being dismissed from the Zoom meeting.

7. Declaration of Interests

A councillor that has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the online '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.

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

Zoom meetings will be recorded for the purposes of assisting the Clerk in preparing the meeting Minutes. The recording will be deleted when the draft minutes have been approved by the Chairman.

11. Information

The chat view box on the Zoom meeting should not be used.

Policy adopted on 21st April 2020. To be reviewed within a year and by the Annual Meeting 2021.

For further information see The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/392/contents/made>