



Saltash Town Council

Policy/Procedure:

Virtual Meeting Protocol and Procedure Rules v2

Date of Adoption:

12.01.2021

This is a Policy or Procedure document of Saltash Town Council to be followed by both Councillors and employees.

Current Status			
Version	2	Approved by	P&F
Date	January 2021	Date of approval	12.01.2021
Responsible Officer	AJT	Minute reference	128/20/21
Responsible Committee	P&F	Review date	May 2021 or if s78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 is repealed before that date

Version History			
Date	Version	Author/Editor	Comments
May 2020	1	AJT	New document
January 2021	2	AJT	Section 5 amended

Review Record				
Date	Type of Review	Minute number	Summary of actions	Completed by

Document Retention	
Document retention period	Until 7 th May 2021

Saltash Town Council Virtual Meeting Protocol and Procedure Rules

Date of adoption: 14.05.2020

Updated January 2021

Scope of application: 4th April 2020 to 7th May 2021

This document should be read in conjunction with the Standing Orders of the Council.

The Regulations made under s78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 apply and where there is a conflict between these and any other adopted standing orders or legislation, these Remote Meetings Procedures take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.

Background:

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4 April 2020. These regulations apply to meetings of the Council that are held or due to be held before 7 May 2021 (unless the legislation is repealed before that date) and make provision for remote access to meetings of local authorities by members of a local authority and by the press and public.

Meeting platform: Annual Zoom Subscription.

1. Preparation:

All staff and Members have been informed of how to access and use the virtual meeting platform.

Members have been given details of the member of staff to contact if they require support or have any technical issues.

Public/Press access: details of how to join a meeting will be noted on the Town Council agenda.

2. Notice of Meeting:

1. The Proper Officer will give the requisite notice to the public of the time of the meeting, and the agenda, together with details of how to join the meeting. This will also be available on the website and social media platforms.
2. Members will be notified of a remote meeting by email and all agenda papers will be available on the Town Council website.
3. The 'place' at which the meeting is held may be at an Authority building or may be where the organiser of the meeting is located or may be an electronic or a digital or virtual location, a web address or a conference call telephone number; or could be a number of these combined. The meeting may also be held in a meeting room or Chamber with a proportion of the membership and any participating public additionally attending remotely.

3. Remote access to Meetings:

1. Members and members of the press and public will be encouraged to use any video conferencing facilities provided by the Council to attend a meeting remotely.
2. If this is not possible, attendance may be through an audio link or by electronic means as referred to in Regulation 5(6)(c) of the Regulations.
3. If technology fails for a wholly remote meeting, and the meeting is no longer open to the public, any decisions made could be challenged as unlawful. Therefore, if the Council become aware of a failure, the meeting will be immediately adjourned by the Chairman until the issue is resolved and only recommence when the Proper Officer is confident that the meeting is again open to the public. If it is not possible to restore the service within a reasonable timeframe, the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chairman or, if a date is not fixed, at the next ordinary meeting.
4. There is a distinction between public accessing the meeting by remote means and public attending to exercise a right to speak. A member of the public who attends to exercise their right to speak and is unable to do so renders only their item incapable of proceeding.

4. Members: Management of remote meetings:

1. Any Member participating in a meeting remotely, must when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and ideally seen) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and ideally see) those other Members participating.
2. In addition, a remote participant must be able to be heard by, and in turn hear any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting and who exercise a right to speak at the meeting.
3. The Chair will confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of a meeting that they can see and hear all participating members. Any Member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can see and hear the proceedings and the other participants.
4. The Chair will confirm that the Meeting is quorate.
5. The Chair will outline how the meeting will be run including arrangements for speaking, voting and the availability of documents (which will have been previously circulated and made available on the Town Council website.)
6. The Minute Taker will record the attendance of Members at the meeting in the normal manner.

7. Normal quorum requirements for meetings as set out in Standing Orders and Terms of Reference for Committees and Sub Committees will also apply to remote meetings.
8. The Code of Conduct still applies in a remote meeting. Members that declare an interest must raise their hand informing the Chairman and will be removed to the waiting room for the duration of the item.
9. Members must make themselves known to the public and press and must not use 'iPad' or a nickname. The 'Cllr' prefix followed by first name and surname should be used.
10. In the event of any apparent failure of the video, telephone or conferencing connection, the Chair will immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:
 - if it is, then the business of the meeting will continue; or
 - if there is no quorum, then the meeting shall adjourn for a period specified by the Chair, expected to be no more than ten or fifteen minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established.
11. Should any aspect of an individual's remote participation fail, the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes or so to determine whether the connection can quickly be re-established, either by video technology or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting should continue to deal with the business whilst this happens, **providing the meeting remains quorate and the public are able to hear.**
12. In order to maintain good sound quality and remove background noise, Members will be on mute and unmuted when speaking. Should they wish to speak they should raise their hand.

5. **Public participation:**

1. A member of the public or press wishing to attend the meeting will be admitted when visible in the waiting room.
2. A member of the public is in remote attendance when they are able to:
 - a. hear and where practicable see and be heard and, where practicable, be seen by members of the Town Council at the meeting;
 - b. hear and where practicable see and be heard by other members of the public attending the meeting including those wishing to speak, where permitted, during the public session or as invited by the Chairman.
3. A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where the conditions in 2 above are not met.
4. Subject to the above, the Chairman may, if appropriate:
 - a. Adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established;

- b. Vary the order of the agenda or complete the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.
- 5. Questions will continue to be received at meetings as laid out in the policy and Standing Orders for receiving public questions at meetings.
- 6. Disruptive behaviour by a member of the public during a remote meeting of the Council will not be tolerated and the Town Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of that person and exclude them from the meeting (Standing Order 4).

7. Closing the meeting

On completion of the meeting the host will end the broadcast. Members and members of the public are reminded to ensure that they leave the meeting and that their connections have been closed.