

Great Notley Parish Council

Protocol for Parish Council meetings held remotely

1. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Corona Virus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 permit Parish Councils to meet via remote means. Pursuant to that legislation this protocol sets out the rules to govern the smooth running of any meetings that Great Notley Parish Council (the Council) chooses to hold using such remote technology and is supplemental to the Standing Orders of the Council which shall otherwise remain in full force and effect.
2. The Chairman shall chair the meeting in the usual manner and issue requests and requirements to the Clerk to assist with the administrative control of the meeting.
3. As the Clerk is legally required to organise the meeting she will be noted on screen as the host which will enable her to assist with the administrative control of the meeting with deference to the requirements of the Chairman. This will enable her to share relevant documentation on screen, admit persons to the meeting, exclude persons from the meeting, observe and feed back to the Chairman where a participant uses the chat function, raise their hand function or reactions function. For the sake of clarification, the Clerk shall not chair the meeting which shall be the sole responsibility of the Chairman.
4. The Clerk shall organise the meeting and shall send the meeting link including meeting code and password to Councillors to enable them to log into the meeting. The Clerk shall also include information on the agenda to enable members of the public to attend the meeting also and the agenda shall be issued and published in accordance with existing legal requirements. A note will be included with details that a person may contact if they are experiencing difficulties accessing the meeting. The Parish Council is fully committed to its legal obligation to allow members of the public to attend a Parish Council meeting.
5. Entry to each meeting shall be via a virtual waiting room where possible. In the event that a Councillor declares a disclosable pecuniary interest in an agenda item whereby they shall absent themselves for the duration of that meeting item they shall be placed in the virtual waiting room and only re-admitted to the meeting at the conclusion of that business. Where it is not possible to use a virtual waiting room any person with a disclosable pecuniary interest shall leave the meeting and await a communication from the Clerk before re-joining.

6. In the event of the Council wishing to debate business of a confidential nature and as a result of passing the appropriate resolution in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 any members of the public shall be required to log off and leave the meeting. In the event that the Clerk notes that they have not complied with that request she shall remove those individuals from the meeting to enable confidential business to be discussed.
7. The existing rules in relation to disorderly conduct at a meeting will continue to apply and in particular Standing Order clause 2. In the event that a person present at the meeting refuses to comply with any requirement by the Chairman to moderate or improve their conduct the Chairman may require that person be removed from the meeting entirely and not to be re-admitted and the Clerk shall action such a request accordingly.
8. With the exception of the Chairman and the Clerk all those in attendance at the meeting shall be muted to avoid extraneous noise and to allow the smooth running of the meeting. A person shall only be unmuted and permitted to speak at the discretion of the Chairman. The Chairman will allow discussion of each agenda item in accordance with the rules contained in the existing Standing Orders to allow appropriate debate.
9. If a person wishes to speak during a meeting, they shall use the 'raise my hand' function or the chat function to communicate this wish to the Clerk who shall advise the Chairman. The Chairman will make the final decision on who shall be unmuted and for how long.
10. In relation to voting upon agenda items the Chairman shall ask each Councillor to vote by using the 'raise my hand' function or the chat function and the Clerk shall verbally confirm the result of each vote.
11. In the event that a document requires a signature it shall be acceptable for the document to be signed and then delivered by post to the Clerk.

These rules were approved by Great Notley Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th May 2020