

Part 4
Section 1A

**Standing Orders – Virtual
meetings**

Approved on 14 April 2020 and containing all subsequent
approved amendments up to 1 May 2020

To be read in conjunction with Part 4, Section 1 - Standing Orders

May 2020

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Part 4, Section 1A

Standing Orders – Virtual Meetings

11. Meeting arrangements during the public health emergency

Introduction

11.01 Different meeting arrangements are in place for the period 4 April 2020 to 7 May 2021 because of the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the Meetings Regulations 2020, to allow formal, virtual meetings.

Interpretation

11.02 These Standing Orders clarify the County Council's temporary legal powers to hold meetings via telephone audio conference, video conference or other electronic means to avoid convening public gathering during the public health emergency. In any instance where these Standing Orders conflict with other Standing Orders or other sections of the Constitution, these Standing Orders prevail until 7 May 2021.

Attendance

11.03 All references to members being 'present' at a meeting include participating through virtual methods, including audio conferencing or video conferencing.

11.04 All references to members 'attending' a meeting include participating through virtual methods, including audio conferencing or video conferencing.

11.05 To qualify as a formal, virtual meeting, members must be able to hear and (where practicable) see and be heard and (where practicable) be seen by other members in attendance at the meeting. This full requirement also extends to members of the public attending to exercise a right to speak at the meeting. All other members of the public must as a minimum be able to hear and (where practicable see) the meeting.

11.06 A member in attendance through virtual methods will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for attendance contained in 11.05 above are not met in their case. In such circumstance the Chairman may, as he or she deems appropriate;

- (a) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for virtual attendance for the member or members to be re-established;
or
- (b) count the number of members in attendance for the purposes of the quorum and, if quorate

- (c) continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member or members. If absent members later re-join the meeting, they will be able to continue to participate, but will not be able to vote in any decision of the Planning, Rights of Way or Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committees where they have missed part of the debate on that item.

11.07 All references to meeting locations include an entirely virtual meeting by audio conference or video conference with no published fixed location.

11.08 Any substitute for a meeting of the Planning, Rights of Way or scrutiny committees must be notified to Democratic Services at least an hour and a half before the Committee is scheduled to begin, to allow time to adjust the meeting settings.

11.09 If any member is not able to attend a meeting for any period of six months which includes any period during the public health emergency, the emergency qualifies as a reason for an extension of that membership to be granted, if necessary to May 2021.

Public access

11.10 All formal meetings will be accessible to the public through live webcasting of the audio or video content, except where exempt items are being discussed.

Communications

11.11 All references to 'nominating', 'writing down' or 'presenting' can include by email, instant message or other electronic methods of communication.

Access to documents

11.12 All references to the 'supply' or 'provision' of documents or 'inspection' of documents at 'County Hall' or 'council offices' will be via electronic methods such as on the County Council's website in the first instance, or via email where permissible. Where practicable, hard copies of documents by post may be available on request for those who do not have internet provision.

Conduct of meetings

11.13 The Chairman of a virtual meeting will manage the meeting with clear instructions and requests to participants. The Chairman will introduce or ask each participant to identify themselves at the start of the meeting. Members will request to speak via electronic means such as instant messaging.

11.14 If the Chairman speaks, any other members shall stop speaking and will seek instruction from the Chairman, in accordance with Standing Order 3.15.

11.15 If a member is asked to stop speaking and to no longer be heard in accordance with Standing Orders 3.18 and 3.19, the Chairman will stop all other speakers until that speaker has agreed to stop speaking or leaves the virtual meeting.

- 11.16 Requests to raise points of order or points of personal explanation as provided for in Standing Order 3.16 must be communicated to the Chairman via electronic means and must be allowed as soon as practicable.
- 11.17 A member requesting to speak to a Committee in accordance with Standing Order 3.20 should put this request to Democratic Services no later than 5 p.m. on the day before the Committee is scheduled to take place.
- 11.18 On any occasion where a committee resolves to go into Part II to discuss exempt or confidential business, each member and officer taking part in the virtual meeting must ensure and verbally declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be participating (whether by hearing or seeing) in the consideration of such items, and that no person is recording the proceedings.

Interests

- 11.19 Standing Order 3.14 continues to apply that members will have regard to the Code of Conduct in any meeting. If a member has a pecuniary or prejudicial interest in an item, they must leave the virtual meeting for the duration of that item, after which they will be invited to re-join the meeting.

Voting

- 11.20 At a virtual meeting, all votes called in accordance with Standing Order 3.35 will be taken by an officer or the Chairman calling each member in turn to cast their vote verbally, or by electronic methods. The Chairman will read out the result when it has been collated. See also provisions in Standing Order 11.6(c) above for Planning, Rights of Way and Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committees.

Site Visits

- 11.21 All references to 'site visits' within the Constitution shall include showing members the site in a virtual manner, including via circulation of a video or photos of the site and site plans.