

Virtual/Remote Committee – Protocol for Conduct at a Committee Meeting

Members are asked to adhere to the following etiquette during remote attendance at a Committee meeting

1. **Notice of a Remote Meeting** - The Proper Officer will give notice of the date and time of any remote meeting called under the Council Procedure Rules and shall provide details of how the remote meeting shall be conducted. The Notice, reports and background papers will be placed on the Local Authority Website – <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/listing/council-meetings>
2. **The Committee** meeting is a virtual/remote meeting in that it is being conducted at no specific location and all participants are at various locations, communicating via audio and online.
3. **The Regulations** (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 made under the Coronavirus Act 2020 enable Council/Committee meetings to be held in a virtual format and enables remote attendance.
4. **Remote Attendance - means a person is able at that time:**
 - (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,
 - (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and
 - (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
5. **Remote Access** - means by electronic means, including by telephone conference, videoconference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming.
6. **Types of Remote Link** - Members have been provided with the 8x8 Communications software to enable them to attend the remote Council meetings. Members should try to establish videoconference capability when they sit as Chair of the meeting and when they speak and when they vote. At all other times during the meeting they should turn off their videoconference and audio. If there are issues with capacity only the Chair of the meeting will remain on videoconference throughout the meeting. Members will be asked only to turn on the videoconference when voting.
7. **The Conduct** – details provided below are set out in relation to Committee meetings held as virtual/remote meetings.
8. **The Meeting** will comprise the usual Members of the Committee or their named Substitutes. For the purposes of this protocol any Members sitting on the Committee as a named Member or named Substitute will be a Member of that Committee for the meeting and referred to as such.
9. **Apologies for the meeting** - The apologies for the remote meeting and details of any named Substitute Members should be given to the Committee Team in the usual manner via the Group Leader, by midday on the day of the remote meeting.

10. **The Minutes of the last meeting** – to be approved by the Committee on their accuracy only and to be signed electronically by the Chair and saved in the Committee folder until such time as the Chair can sign them.
11. **Late Items of Business** – would need to be approved by the Chair of the meeting to take as any late item(s) of business which had not been available five clear working days before the meeting. The late item(s) of business to be announced at the meeting by the Committee Clerk and a reason for the urgency of the item to be announced.
12. **Declaration of Interests** - Any Member participating by remote link who declares an interest in any item of business will be required to leave the remote meeting – this will need to be confirmed by the Committee Officer that the Member has left the meeting. The Committee Officer and Lead Officer will confirm to the Member when they may re-join the remote meeting.
13. **The Quorum for the Remote Meeting** is 5 for Policy and Resources Committee and 4 for other Committees. Any Member participating by remote attendance shall be regarded as present for the purposes of determining quorum. In the event of any failure of the audio the Chair will immediately determine if the remote meeting is still quorate. If it is, then the business of the remote meeting will continue, if there is no quorum then the remote meeting will only in such circumstances adjourn for a period specified by the Chair to allow the connection to be re-established.
14. **Exclusion of members of the public and press** will be required to leave the remote meeting should items need to be discussed which are exempt from being discussed in public under the access to information procedure rules. Part I of Schedule 12A (Paragraphs 1 to 7)
15. **Members of the public wishing to speak** - will be entitled to register and identify which Part I reports(s) they wish to speak on from the published agenda for the remote meeting. **Those who wish to register to speak must do so by notifying the Committee team by e-mail 48 hours before the meeting. The first 2 people to register on any report (1 for and 1 against) will be sent a link so that they can join the meeting to exercise that right.** This will also allow the Committee Team to prepare the speaker sheet in advance of the remote meeting to forward to the Chair of the meeting.
16. **Other members of the public** Other members of the public who wish to hear the meeting discussion and view the remote meeting but who do not wish to speak will be able to live stream the remote meeting using the virtual meeting link published on the Council's website with the agenda. Members of the public will not be able to make any comments as this function will be switched off for all remote meetings.
17. **Ward Councillors/Other Councillors/Parish Councillors** to provide 48 hours' notice along with details of which report(s) they wish to speak on from the published agenda for the remote meeting. This is so that a link to the virtual meeting can be sent in advance and for the speaker sheet to be prepared for the Chair of the meeting. **Those who wish to register to speak must do so by notifying the Committee team by e-mail 48 hours before the meeting. They will be called upon to speak by leave of the Chair of the meeting.**

18. **Opening of the Meeting** - The Chair will open the remote meeting by confirming who is present: Members of the Committee will then introduce themselves, then the Council Officers present, Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors and members of the public who have registered to speak at the remote meeting. . Any Member participating by remote link must also confirm at the outset that he/she can see and hear the proceedings and the other attendees. Committee Team will record attendance on behalf of Members.
19. **Order of Business** - The Chair of the meeting will proceed in the order of business as published on the agenda for the remote meeting.
20. **Livestreaming** - Under the virtual meeting regulations that govern the conduct of meetings held remotely it is a requirement that not only should all members present be able to hear and be heard, where the meeting is in public any member of the public attending remotely should also be able to hear the debate. Therefore in the event that, for any reason, connectivity is lost with the live streaming, the Officer responsible for monitoring the live streaming will immediately notify the Chair who will adjourn the meeting until such time as the live stream has been restored. In the event that it cannot be restored within 10 minutes of the start of the adjournment the Chair will adjourn the meeting to another date and time.
21. **The Discussion** - Chaired where possible by the Chair or the Vice Chair. The Chair will state the item to be discussed and ask the Lead Officer to introduce the report and provide any update to the report for Members which may have arisen since the report was published.
22. **Members of the Committee** will be asked by the Chair if they wish to speak. Members should indicate using the hand symbol on the 8x8 Communication System if they wish to speak and when not speaking will be asked to have their microphone on "mute". The Chair will then call on each Member in turn of who indicated a wish to speak and ask them to activate their speaker when invited to speak and give their name. Members should only speak when invited and only one Member should speak at a time.
22. **Speakers outside the Committee** Where a Ward Councillor, Parish Councillor or member of the public has requested to speak the Chair will then ask them to speak in turn. Members of the public registered with the Committee Team to speak will be allowed to speak with the objector speaking first and the supporter second. Before addressing the remote meeting, each person will be asked to state their name and asked to show respect to each other and not to talk over someone who is already speaking. They will be asked to put on the mute button if not speaking. They will have up to 3 minutes to speak. They will not be entitled to take part in the discussion. Once the report they have spoken on is over they will be able to leave the remote meeting.
23. **Other Members of the Public** - Any other persons who are listening in via the live stream are accessing the meeting but are not entitled to take any active part in the meeting. The Chair has the discretion to remove any member of the public from the remote meeting by any remote means if they interrupt, try to engage in the meeting, or are abusive having been warned about their behaviour.
24. **Disruption to remote conferencing** - should any aspect of the videoconference fail, the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to ten minutes to determine whether the link can quickly be re-established. In the event of individual link failures, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have

left the meeting at the point of failure and if the link cannot be re-established then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue. If the link is successfully re-established then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.

25. **Summing up** - The Chair will then ask if any Members of the Committee wish to speak again having heard the debate. Members must only speak if they have a new matter to raise and should indicate by using the raised hand symbol on the 8x8 Communications System. The Chair will then give their name and the Member may speak. The Chair will then call on each Member as indicated. At the end of the discussion the Chair will sum up the views of the Members.
26. **Voting** - Only Members present during the entire debate for an item are entitled to vote on it. If a Member has been cut off during the debate and rejoined the remote meeting then they will not be able to vote on that item. The Chair will be mindful of any Member experiencing difficulties. The Chair will then ask the Committee Members to vote. This should be done with the videoconference on so that Officers and other Members of the Committee can clearly see how each Member is voting. If the videoconference does not work Members will still be entitled to vote. The Committee Clerk will then total up the votes and advise the Chair.
27. **Announcing vote result** - The Chair will then announce the vote result to the Committee via the videoconference. Where there is a recorded vote, the votes made will be recorded by the Committee Clerk and the result of the recorded vote announced by the Chairman to all the participants.
28. **Process for each item of business** – the same process will follow for all the items on the published agenda.
29. **Part II confidential business** - For Part II Confidential items of business a separate meeting request will be sent by the Committee Team to just the Members on the Committee who are debating and voting on the Part II Confidential Business. Point 14 would need to be followed when moving into Part II Confidential business.
30. **Decisions** - The full minutes will be published on the Council's website in time for the next meeting of the Committee
31. **Recording** - All meetings will be recorded.
32. **Petitions** – should any petitions be submitted which have reached the required 25 signatures Rule 18 of the Council Constitution will be followed with the Group Leaders advised of the receipt of the petition by the Committee Officer. A suggestion on which Committee the petition should be presented will be provided for agreement. Once agreement is made with the Group Leaders, the Lead Petitioner would be advised and would be invited to present the petition remotely at the appropriate Committee meeting.
33. **This protocol** is a guide as to how virtual/remote Council meetings should be conducted. This protocol will sit alongside the Council's Procedure Rules set out in the Council Constitution and are considered good practice and etiquette.
34. **The Chair** has the discretion to amend this Protocol as necessary.