



Virtual Meeting Policy and Standing Orders

June 2020

1. Introduction

Wimborne Minster Town Council has adopted the following policy and changes to Standing Orders to allow for virtual meetings to be held in accordance with 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020'. Unless the contrary is determined by the Council this policy and changes to Standing Orders will apply until the next Annual Meeting of the Town Council on 11 May 2021.

2. Publishing the agenda and providing documents

An agenda and supporting documents will be published on the Town Council's website and noticeboards in accordance with The Local Government Act 1972 and the 2020 Regulations mentioned above. Any person unable to access documents on the Council's website should contact the Council by telephone on 01202 881655 or email office@wimborne.gov.uk and arrangements for a copy to be sent to you can be agreed. In cases where documents originate from a third party, electronic links/hard copies will be provided where available.

3. Virtual Meeting 'platform'

Wimborne Minster Town Council will utilise Zoom (or another similar platform such as Microsoft Teams) to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems.

In preparation for the meeting the Clerk of the meeting will publish on the website:

- The Zoom meeting link for audio only
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode if necessary

4. Public Involvement in Meetings

Members of the public and press will be allowed to listen *and watch* the meeting in audio mode only. To avoid disruption they will not be displayed on video or be able to be heard by the meeting.

Any questions which members of the public wish to put to the Council or Committees must be in writing and received by 9.30 am on the preceding working day before the meeting using the following email address: office@wimborne.gov.uk. Alternatively, a written question can be delivered to the Town Hall by 9.30 am on the preceding working day before the meeting. Every effort will be made to answer the question at the meeting but there may be a need to obtain information from other sources and in those circumstances a written response will be provided at a subsequent time.

5. Notification to Councillors of Meetings

All Councillors will be sent the appropriate Zoom meeting link by email on the same date as the agenda is published. In the event that a Councillor is unable to join the meeting they should advise the appropriate officer who will be clerking the meeting. This is to ensure that a quorum will be present. The Councillor's absence will be recorded in the minutes.

6. **Standing Orders**

Standing Orders on rules of debate will apply to all meetings as if Councillors were present in a meeting room.

7. **Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements**

The Clerk of the meeting will control (host) the Zoom conference call. Throughout the meeting (with the exception of the Chairman) all Councillors and officers will be muted unless invited to speak

- Once the meeting has commenced, the Chairman will carry out a roll call of Councillors and officers present for the benefit of the public who may be listening, introduce each agenda item and prompt when Councillors should speak, debate or vote.
- Councillors and officers should activate the blue **raise hand** icon to speak, then wait for the Chairman to invite them to speak. At that point, the Clerk will unmute the relevant person so that they may be heard.

Discussions

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

a. Voting

- The Chairman will give a summary of the discussion and any motion which has been moved and seconded prior to inviting Councillors to vote.
- The method of voting on motions or amendments will be determined by the Chairman and will be either by roll call or an electronic poll of those Councillors who are for, against or abstaining. A roll call can be requested by two Councillors in accordance with Standing Order 13. The Clerk of the meeting will announce the result of the vote and the Chairman will then announce the decision.
- If, when a motion is proposed and seconded, **a Councillor wishes to propose an amendment, he/she should click the blue raise hand icon before the vote is taken.** If the amendment is seconded, the debate and voting on the amendment will take place in accordance with Standing Order 29.

b. Points of Order

Any Councillor wishing to raise a point of order, should use the 'chat' function in Zoom to briefly explain the point they wish to raise. This message will be visible to all Councillors, and the Chairman will decide whether to interrupt the current speaker to address the point of order being raised.

c. Poor connectivity

In the case of any Councillor being subject to poor broadband connectivity the Chairman will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene.

d. Attendance

- If a Councillor decides to leave the meeting before its conclusion the **blue raise hand icon should be activated** and the Chairman notified. This will be recorded by the Clerk in the usual way. Councillors leaving should ensure the **leave meeting** button is clicked to ensure they have left.

- If a Councillor is believed to have ‘dropped out’ of the meeting because of poor connectivity, this will be minuted. If ‘drop-outs’ result in the meeting becoming inquorate Councillors will be permitted to endeavour to re-join the meeting for a period of 15 minutes. After 15 minutes has elapsed and the meeting is still inquorate the Chairman will suspend the meeting and reconvene at a later time and date subject to the statutory days’ notice. All Councillors will be advised of the new date and time.

8. Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders apply with regard to Conduct at Meetings and all attendees are expected to be mindful of the difficulties some Councillors might experience with regard to the operation of technology. Members of the public and press can listen in to the meeting at any time.

9. Declaration of Interests

A Councillor who has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the Zoom ‘waiting room’. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration was made the Councillor will be allowed to re-join the meeting.

10. Confidential Matters

Confidential matters will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting that is available to Councillors only. On conclusion of the non-confidential matters on an agenda the meeting will reconvene either immediately afterwards or at another date and time. A separate confidential Zoom meeting link will have been provided to Councillors only. If held on a different date a separate Zoom meeting link will be provided.

11. Recording of meetings

Formal Zoom meetings of the Council and its Committees will be recorded and made available to Councillors, the press and members of the public only until such time as the minutes have been confirmed at a subsequent meeting. Recordings will then be destroyed.

- 12.** Once the meeting is concluded, the Chairman will announce the time which will be recorded by the Clerk who will then wait for all Councillors to leave before clicking **End the meeting for all** button.

Policy adopted 12 June 2020

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