

Council 29th June 2020

Item 3 refers

VIRTUAL MEETINGS PROCEDURE RULES

The Council will continue to hold Council/Committee meetings during the current coronavirus pandemic, taking into account the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations) that were issued on 2 April 2020 and came into effect on 4th April 2020.

Specifically, in relation to Harborough District Council the Remote Meetings Procedure Rules were adopted on 8 April 2020 under the emergency planning powers vested in the Joint Chief Executive under Part 3 of the Constitution. Therefore, for meetings of the Council which need to take place after 8th April 2020 the Procedure Rules as detailed below will apply.

CHAPTER 4 - REMOTE MEETINGS PROCEDURE RULES

These standing orders provide the rules for the conduct of any meeting which the Council has determined will be suitable for remote conferencing of the Council and its various Committees, Sub-Committees and Working groups.

Members may be able to participate by remote means (including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, live interactive streaming) if so agreed by the Chair of the Meeting in accordance with arrangements agreed from time to time by the Council. Attendance by remote means will be with the agreement of the Chair and processes for arranging attendance as set out in these Procedure Rules must be complied with.

How will notice of Meetings be provided?

The Head of Paid Service will give notice to the public of the time of the meeting and shall provide details of how the meeting shall be open to the public which shall be through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.

Application of the Meetings Procedure Rules

These Rules should be read in conjunction with the Council Procedure Rules which details the rules of debate and apply to all meetings of the Council except as varied by Committee Procedure Rules.

Quorum

Any Member so authorised to participate by remote conferencing shall be regarded as present for the purposes of determining a quorum.

In the event of any failure of the video conferencing link the Chair will immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate, if it is then the business of the meeting will continue, if there is no quorum then the meeting will only in such circumstances, adjourn for a period specified by the Chair to allow the connection to be re-established.

Notice of Remote Link

Any Member wishing to participate by remote means in any meeting of the Council, or of a Committee or Sub-Committee, must confirm their attendance by such means in writing to Democratic Services (democratic.services@harborough.gov.uk) at least 48 hours in advance of the start of the meeting.

The remote means must be established and tested before the commencement of the meeting.

Types of Remote Link

Members should try to establish video conferencing capability however by exception, they may attend by audio only.

Record of Attendance

The Chair will confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can see and hear all participating Members. Any Member participating by remote link must also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that he/she can see and hear the proceedings and the other attendees.

Democratic Services will record attendance on behalf of Members.

Declaration of Interests

Any Member participating by remote link who declares an interest in any item of business in terms which requires them to leave the room must also leave the remote conference. The departure will be confirmed by Democratic Services. This member of staff will thereafter confirm to the remote Member when they may re-join the meeting.

Where possible any declarations of interest should be established through discussion with the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting and any intention to refrain from partaking in a particular item of business should be notified to Democratic Services on the working day before the scheduled meeting.

Disruption to remote conferencing

Should any aspect of the conference link fail, the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes to determine whether the link can quickly be re-established. If the link cannot be re-established the meeting shall be adjourned to a later date.

In the event of link failure for individual Members, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure of the equipment and if the link cannot be re-established before the end of the meeting then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item providing the meeting remains quorate.

If the individual Members link is successfully re-established then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment. Account will need to be taken

of the requirement at certain meetings, notably Planning Committee, that to take part in the debate and vote a member needs to have heard all of the discussion and debate.

Notification of Right to Speak

The Chair shall determine at the commencement of the meeting how Members should notify them that they wish to speak considering whether video or audio conferencing is being used.

Voting

A remote Member participating in a vote will cast his/her vote as if participating in a recorded vote.

Exclusion of Public

If a remote Member wishes to participate in discussion of a confidential/exempt item they must verify that the venue is secure, that no member of the public has access and that no recording of the proceedings is being made, by any person. The members of staff present will ensure that no recording is taking place.

Attendance by the Public and Press

Members of the public and press entitled to attend a meeting will be provided with details on how to access the meeting through remote means.

Attendance by members of the public and press through remote means will be subject to the Council Procedure Rules and the Committee Procedure Rules.

Public Speaking

Any member of the public or external attendee entitled to speak at the meeting pursuant to the Council Procedure Rules will be provided with details on how to access the meeting through remote means.