



# Penrith Town Council

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## REMOTE MEETINGS STANDING ORDERS

### INTRODUCTION AND APPLICATION

- These standing orders provide the means and guidance for the conduct of any remote meeting of the Council, and its various Committees and Sub-Committees, held under the provisions of the Regulations and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders.
- The Regulations, made under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, apply notwithstanding any other legislation or current or pre-existing standing orders or any other rules of the Authority governing meetings and remain valid until 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. This means that, wherever there is a conflict, these Remote Meetings Standing Orders take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.
- Any remote or virtual meeting of the Council shall be conducted in accordance with these Standing Orders and 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 standing orders exist only on a temporary basis, having effect between 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- The Standing Orders of the Council shall apply to any remote meeting which may be held save that in relation to any such meeting Standing Orders:
  - a) 3 i (person requesting to speak) 3 s (voting) and 3 w (business inquorate) shall not apply and shall be replaced by the provisions of these standing orders as they apply to a remote meeting; and
  - b) (Minutes) shall be amended to include viii that the meeting took place remotely and the method by which the meeting took place.

- A member of the Council in attendance at the meeting must be able to:
  - a) Hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard, and where practicable be seen, by other members in attendance.
  - b) Hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard, and where practicable be seen, by any member of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak.
  - c) Be heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other member of the public attending the meeting.
- The Standing Orders are an immediate response to the Regulations and are based on the information available at this point. This document may be updated in due course in response to further advice and guidance.

## 1. **ANNUAL MEETING**

1.1 There is no requirement to hold an Annual Meeting.

The requirement to hold an Annual Meeting of the Council is to be disregarded and, prior to 7th May 2021, an Annual Meeting of Council may only take place:

- (a) Where called by the Chair; or
- (b) Following a resolution calling for an Annual Meeting being passed at an ordinary or extraordinary meeting of Council.

1.2 Amends Model Council Standing Order 5b.

## 2. **NOTICE OF MEETINGS AND PAPERS**

2.1 A remote meeting of the Council or of any of its committees may be called as an Extraordinary General Meeting if and only if a matter is required to be determined, is urgent, or must be resolved within a particular statutory timescale.

2.2 The proper officer will give the requisite notice to the public of the time of the meeting, and the agenda, together with details of how to join the meeting which needs be available on the Council's website:  
<https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/meetings/full-council/>

2.3 Members will be notified of a remote meeting by email and all agenda papers will be available on the Council website.

- 2.4 The 'place' at which the meeting is held may be where the organiser of the meeting is located or may be an electronic or a digital or virtual location, a web address, or a conference call telephone number; or could be a number of these combined.
- 2.5 The meeting may also be held in a meeting room with minimum of the quorum of the membership and participating public attending remotely to ensure appropriate social distance rules are maintained.
- 2.6 The agenda for the meeting will include any necessary procedural items and the matter which is or the matters which are urgent and no others.
- 2.7 The agenda for the meeting will be prepared by the Clerk.
- 2.8 The agenda will identify the time, date, and place of the meeting.
- 2.9 Documents from a third party will be accessible by an electronic link.
- 2.10 If anyone is unable to gain access to a document on the website, it can be made available on request made to the Clerk.
- 2.11 Any document, which is private and confidential, will be made available only to Members.
- 2.12 A Member who is unable to access an agenda electronically will be provided one by post on notifying the Clerk of this circumstance.

### 3. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

- 3.1 Members and members of the press and public will be encouraged to use any video conferencing facilities provided by the Council to attend a meeting remotely.
- 3.2 If this is not possible, attendance may be through an audio link or by electronic means (5(6) (c) of the Regulations).
- 3.3 Remote access for members of the public and Members who are not attending to participate in the meeting together with press facilities, will wherever possible, be provided through webcasting, live audio streaming, or others means.

- 3.4 A technological failure removing the ability for the public to access the meeting by remote will render the whole public part of the meeting incapable of proceeding).
- 3.5 A member of the public who attends to exercise their right to speak and is unable to do so renders only their item incapable of proceeding (This is set out paragraph 5 below).
- 3.6 If the Chair is made aware that the meeting is not accessible to the public through remote means, due to any technological or other failure of provision, then the Chair, on becoming aware of this circumstance shall suspend the meeting.
- 3.7 If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period, then the meeting shall be adjourned, and the remaining business considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

#### **4. REMOTE MEETING MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Any Member participating in a meeting remotely, must when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and if practicable seen) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and if practicable see) those other Members participating.
- 4.2 A Members who is a remote participant must be able to be heard by, and in turn hear any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting and who exercise a right to speak at the meeting.
- 4.3 The Chair will confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of a meeting that they can see and hear all participants, (this is unlikely to be practical for a meeting of Full Council). To this end, the Chair will ask for a roll call of participants and request that each person say their name to confirm they can hear and participate.
- 4.4 Any Member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can hear the proceedings and the other participants.
- 4.5 The clerk to the meeting will record the attendance of those members at the meeting.

- 4.6 The quorum requirements for all meetings during the infectious disease crisis is three.
- 4.7 In the event of any apparent failure of the video, telephone or conferencing connection, the Chair should immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:
- a) If it is, then the business of the meeting will continue; or
  - b) If there is no quorum, then the meeting shall adjourn for a period specified by the Chair, expected to be no more than five minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established.
- 4.8 Should any aspect of an individual's remote participation fail, the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes to determine whether the connection can be re-established, by either video technology or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting should continue to deal with the business whilst this happens, providing the meeting remains quorate and the public are able to hear.
- 4.9 In the event of connection failure, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure and if the connection cannot be re-established to those Member(s) before the end of the meeting, then the meeting shall continue to deal with the item/s of business provided it remains quorate.
- 4.10 If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.
- 4.11 Etiquette at the meeting is referred to further below.
- 4.12 Members should send apologies or of any expected lateness ahead of the meeting via email to the clerk.
- 4.13 Participants should mute all other applications and silence their phone to avoid additional sound interference.

## 5. **REMOTE ATTENDANCE OF THE PUBLIC**

- 5.1 Members of the public attending a meeting remotely must, when they are speaking be able to be heard by all other participants in attendance. The remote public participant must be able to hear those other members participating be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending.
- 5.2 Advance notification from members of the public wishing to attend a meeting remotely, must be received by the clerk by noon of the day of the meeting and an invitation to participate in the meeting will then be sent in advance of that meeting's commencement.
- 5.3 Alternatively, for those members of the press and public who do not have the technological solution, public representations, submissions, or petitions may be submitted in writing only and will be read out by the Chair or an officer.
- 5.4 The clerk to the meeting should be able to mute the member of the public once they have spoken and remove them from the remote meeting on the instruction of the Chair, in order to maintain the good administration of the meeting or to retain order.
- 5.5 A breakdown of the technology should not disadvantage the member of the public in remote attendance wherever possible.
- 5.6 Should any aspect of an individual's remote participation fail, the Chair may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes to determine whether the connection can quickly be re-established either, by video technology or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting shall continue to deal with the business.
- 5.7 The Chair may suspend consideration of the item of business in relation to the member of public's attendance until such time as a following item of business on the agenda has been transacted and the conditions for the member of the public's remote attendance have been re-established or, on confirmation that this cannot be done, before the end of the meeting, whichever is the earliest; or
- 5.8 Continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.

## 6. MEETING PROCEDURES

- 6.1 A meeting administrator, other than the clerk will control the video, conferencing technology employed for remote access, including the administration of the public and Member interaction, connections, voting and instructions of the Chair.
- 6.2 The Council will endeavour to put in place a technological solution that will enable Members participating in meetings remotely to indicate their wish to speak by raising their hand.
- 6.3 In respect of Full Council, it will assist the meeting if those Members who wish to speak on a particular item could indicate their wish to speak to the Chair and to the clerk in advance of the start of the meeting. This is particularly important if Members are unable to participate via video conference.
- 6.4 The Chair will follow the rules set out in the Councils adopted Standing Orders when determining who may speak, as well as the order and priority of speakers and the content and length of speeches in the normal way.
- 6.5 The Chair, at the beginning of the meeting, will explain the protocol for member and public participation and the rules of debate.
- 6.6 The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.
- 6.7 Members are asked to adhere to the following etiquette during remote attendance at a meeting:
  - a) Members are asked to join the meeting no later than fifteen minutes before the start to allow themselves and the meetings administrator the opportunity to test the equipment.
  - b) Any camera (video-feed) should show a non-descript background or, where possible, a virtual background and members should be careful to not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video-feed.
  - c) Type their name on joining the meeting in full, e.g., "Cllr Joanne Smith" (where the technological solution employed by the Council enables this).
  - d) All Members to have their microphones muted when not talking.

- e) A Member may speak only when invited to by the Chair.
- f) Only one person may speak at any one time.
- g) The Member will turn on their microphone and state their name before making a comment.
- h) When referring to a specific report, page, or slide, the Member must mention the report, page, or slide so that all members have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

6.8 Where members of the public are exercising speaking rights at the meeting via remote attendance, the Chair will as part of their introduction explain the procedure for their participation, which will reflect those relevant elements of the above. Members of the public must adhere to this procedure otherwise, they may be excluded from the meeting.

6.9 When the Chair is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate and (if the rules of the meeting require) there is a proposer and seconder for the item being discussed, the Chair will progress to making a decision. Unless a Recorded Vote is called, the method of voting will be by the Chair calling out the name of each member present . Members will state orally 'for', 'against', or 'abstain' to indicate their vote when their name is called, and the Chair will then move onto the next agenda item.

6.10 Details of how Members voted will not be kept or minuted unless a Recorded Vote is called. Where a Recorded Vote is requested, the Chair will ask members in turn to signify verbally whether or not they support that request.

6.11 The normal standing orders relating to disorderly behaviour apply to remote meetings. The Chair will control disorderly behaviour as if it were an usual meeting. The Chair may mute participants if they indulge in any disorderly behaviour.

6.12 A member of the public or press who is disorderly may be dismissed from the meeting by the Chair.

## **7. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

- 7.1 Any Member participating in a remote meeting who declares a disclosable pecuniary interest, or other declarable interest, in any item of business that would normally require them to leave the room, must also leave the remote meeting. The means of remote attendance and access is to be severed whilst any discussion or vote takes place in respect of the item or items of business which the member or co-opted member may not participate.
- 7.2 Their departure will be confirmed by the meeting administrator, who will send the Member to a waiting room and they will be returned to the meeting at the appropriate time.

## **8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

- 8.1 There are times when Council meetings are not open to the public, when confidential matters, are under consideration.
- 8.2 Where the technology is available, the meeting administrator will ensure that there are no members of the public in remote attendance or remotely accessing the meeting are able to hear or see the proceedings once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting.
- 8.3 Each Member in remote attendance must ensure and verbally declare that there is no other persons present who is not entitled to be (either hearing or seeing) present during the consideration of confidential items, and/or recording the proceedings.
- 8.4 Any Member in remote attendance who fail to disclose that there was in fact any person present who was not so entitled may be adjudged to be in breach of the Members' Code of Conduct responsibilities.

## **9. PUBLIC ACCESS TO MEETING DOCUMENTATION FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

- 9.1 Members of the public may access minutes, and other relevant documents through the Council's website.
- 9.2 Requests for access to the list of background papers and other relevant documents should be by email or by post.