

Magor with Undy Town Council

Protocols for Multi-location / Remote Meeting Attendance For Councillors, Staff and Members of the Public

Protocols for Multi-location / Remote Meeting Attendance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol is designed to support the Council to provide for multi-location/remote attendance at Council meetings in accordance with Section 47 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and to make suitable provisions that assists the Chair in the management of the meeting.
- 1.2 This means that the Council will hold official meetings virtually, or on a hybrid basis. Examples of this could include:
 - a) All participants are in the same physical location.
 - b) All participants are in the same physical location except one individual who joins from another location.
 - c) Roughly equal number of councillors are present in a physical space and joining through remote means.
 - d) Wholly through remote means where no physical arrangements have been made.
- 1.3 Members of the Council and members of the public can participate from multiple locations via remote conferencing.
- 1.4 This protocol document does not override the Town Council Standing Orders.

2. Remote conferencing

- 2.1 The Town Council will be using Zoom conferencing software which enables people to be heard and seen.
- 2.2 The legislation specifies that meetings may be held by any means which enables persons who are not in the same place to speak to and be heard by each other '(whether or not the equipment or facility also enables those persons to see each other)' therefore, the lack, or loss, of a video feed will not prevent the meeting from proceeding.
- 2.3 The Town Clerk will handle meeting logistics.

3. Behaviours

- 3.1 Good meeting behaviours will be expected. The Council will not accept or tolerate any inappropriate behaviours, comments, postings, or contributions.
- 3.2 Standing Orders still apply to multi-location meetings. However, given the immediate and potentially highly offensive nature of online abuse any suspected infringement will result in the host muting the feed from the alleged offender and returning them to the waiting room.

- 3.3 At the direction of the meeting Chair, the host will close the connection to the party concerned if possible. If it is not possible to exclude any contribution or contributor, the meeting may be terminated on the direction of the Chair and resumed as soon as practicable
- 3.4 Remote / virtual meetings require some patience and work much more effectively when Councillors demonstrate respect for each other and the Chair.

4. Before the Meeting

- 4.1 The Town Clerk will host the meeting and publish the meeting agenda/summons/notice in accordance with regulations. Included in the notice will be information for members of the public of how they may join the meeting online.
- 4.2 Members of the public who wish to participate online shall be required to email the Council in advance (as deemed necessary by the Clerk) of the meeting for information which enables them to join the meeting online.
- 4.3 Members of the public who have joined the meeting online will be required to display their full name on their Zoom account, introduce themselves or have their device camera on so that they are visible.
- 4.4 Participants should join the meeting ahead of the scheduled start time so that the meeting can start on time and allow for any technical issues to be resolved. (The Council is not responsible for any technical issues experienced by participants online).
- 4.5 Participants shall ensure that they are in a quiet location so that there is no disruption of proceedings.
- 4.6 Councillors who are unable to connect due to technological or internet failures will be able to tender their apologies, and this would be accepted as a legitimate reason for non-attendance.

5. Start of the Meeting

- 5.1 The Town Clerk will open the remote meeting room at least fifteen minutes before the start of the meeting and will admit participants to the meeting at the scheduled start time.
- 5.2 Councillors attending remotely will ensure their names are displayed, to allow members of the public to recognise who is speaking.
- 5.3 The Chair will welcome all participants at the beginning of the meeting and check that everyone can hear/see the proceeding.
- 5.4 The host will place everyone on mute.

6. During the Meeting

- 6.1 The meeting protocol is the same as it would be in a traditional meeting in the meeting venues used by Magor with Undy Town Council.

Main points:

- a) All contributions must go through the Chair.
- b) Councillors must raise their hand either in person or by using the remote hand icon and wait to be invited to speak by the Chair.
- c) Members of the public will invited by the Chair to present during the Public Open Forum at the commencement of the meeting and that they should respect the Chair and wait in turn to speak.
- d) Unmute your microphone to speak. Mute your microphone following any contribution.

- e) Councillors will be invited to vote by clear show of hands and these must remain raised until completion of the count, as instructed by the Chair. If a recorded vote is required, this would be achieved by the Chair calling each name alphabetically with a response of 'for', 'against' or 'abstain' from each Councillor which can be noted by the Town Clerk to ensure accurate representation and recording of decisions.
- f) If any participant leaves the meeting for whatever reason, this will be recorded in the minutes. If the participant re-joins the meeting, this will also be noted in the minutes.
- g) If a Councillor, who is attending remotely declares an interest, the Councillor (unless dispensation has been granted to speak) will be removed to the 'waiting room' by the Town Clerk and readmitted once the item has been discussed.
- h) The Zoom 'chat' facilities will not be allowed during meetings.
- i) Ensure that you remain quiet in the meeting room to avoid unnecessary noise being picked up by the microphones.

7. Exclusion of Press & Public

- 7.1 If the Council resolves to exclude the press and public in line with the Council's Standing Orders due to a confidential or prejudicial matter, the host shall proceed to remove all members of the public.
- 7.2 Councillors' remote participation in any confidential 'part 2' items must ensure their camera is activated and confirm their sole presence in the room before engaging in deliberations. Any member in remote attendance who failed to disclose that there were in fact persons present who were not so entitled would be in breach of their Code of Conduct responsibilities.

8. Photographing, recording, broadcasting, or transmitting

- 8.1 Photographing, recording, broadcasting, or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior written consent.
- 8.2 The Town Council is not liable for the actions of any person making a recording at or of a Town Council meeting which identifies a member of the public or for any publication of that recording.
- 8.3 The Town Council records the meetings to assist with the accuracy of the minutes only. The recordings are not published.
- 8.4 The printed and signed minutes of a Town Council meeting remain the statutory and legally binding formal record of Town Council decisions.

9. Video conferencing tips and best practice

- a) Know how to join the meeting (remember that numbers for landlines, mobiles and video may be different).
- b) Practice in advance to ensure that you are familiar with the software and iron out any technical issues – using this equipment and software will become more familiar and straightforward the more it is used.
- c) Check that you can see/hear the Chair of the meeting. (know how to adjust your settings such as microphone sensitivity and volume levels).
- d) Check your lighting, is there enough light for people to see you? avoid backlight or sun streaks.
- e) Remember to conduct yourself as you would in any public meeting.
- f) Fully charge your equipment, meetings can use a lot of battery.

- g) Call from a comfortable position, as the meeting may take some time, have some water handy.
- h) Put electronic devices on silence and ensure there is no other background noise.
- i) Make sure that you are in the centre of the screen by positioning your device or camera appropriately and look into the camera. Aim for a head and shoulders shot similar to a passport photo.
- j) Keep your device still and on a flat surface.
- k) Consider your personal appearance, you will be on show throughout the meeting if joining via video.
- l) Consider the background, aim for a plain backdrop if possible.