

Attending a virtual council meeting

Background

During the lockdown, the parish council is unable to meet in real life, and has decided to opt for virtual meetings in order to maintain its business. This means that residents are still able to participate, ask questions and be involved in the meeting as they would in real life. The only difference is that it's done remotely.

The council uses a simple telephone conferencing system to bring everyone together at the same time. You can use either your landline or mobile handset, and the charge for taking part is the same as your current telephone charging plan. This means that there are no premium rates to pay, and if you get free time as part of your package, you can use those.

How to join the meeting

Dial this number and follow the voice prompts:

Dial: 0333 0164 757

Room number: 917-443-43 #

Guest PIN: 97-78 #

When you enter the 'room', the host will hear a tone and know that you have joined the group. The Chair will introduce themselves and ask you to do the same.

How does the meeting run?

In exactly the same way as the ones in real life. You can view the agenda beforehand (download a copy from the website), and time is set aside at the start of the meeting for 'public participation' which is where you can speak if you want.

Order of the meeting

The Chair of the meeting will start by welcoming everybody. Councillors will be asked if they have any personal interest or conflicts of interest in what they are due to discuss. This is always made in public so that everyone knows if there could be a bias in what is being decided.

Public Participation

There is a general open session shortly after the beginning of all public meetings. This is an opportunity to ask your Councillors or council officers questions, or to make a statement. Councillors put aside 15 minutes at the start of each meeting for visitors to speak.

The Chair can decide to extend this period at his discretion – but best practice advice is that because of the restrictions imposed by not being able to see each other (not being able to see reactions or body language) the time limit should be enforced.

Ask your question (or make your statement) in a straightforward way. There is no need to make elaborate speeches or arguments. Councillors appreciate simple and direct questions. You are limited to 3 minutes for your speech unless the chair agrees a longer time.

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If you are unable to attend, you can send a question or prepared statement beforehand, and the Clerk will read it out on your behalf. We won't read out your name unless you have given us your permission.

However, you are welcome to attend or just listen in to the whole of the meeting without speaking. If you are unable to attend, you can send a question or prepared statement beforehand, and the Clerk will read it out on your behalf. We won't read out your name unless you have given us your permission.

If you think this may be problematic, I'd invite you to write to me with the background to your topic and I can circulate that to councillors prior to the meeting to save you valuable time.

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Agenda

All of the matters to be discussed at meetings of the council are listed in an agenda published at least three working days before the date of that meeting. You can find details on the council's main website (search for 'Meetings') or look on the parish noticeboards in the village centre

If you have come to speak on a topic that is listed on the agenda, you can make your comments at the start of the meeting. However, the Chair may later invite you to speak during the meeting if what they think you have to say is relevant. The clerk will record what you say and remind councillors of it when they reach the appropriate part of the meeting.

Once the Public Participation section has been completed, the chair will then review what happened at the previous meeting, and ask councillors if they agree with the record of minutes.

Voting in meetings like this is done by the Chair asking each Councillor in turn if they support the motion. Because all councillors take responsibility for the decisions made, we do not record individual votes and no separate record is kept. The Chair will then progress through the remainder of the agenda.

Finally

Remember, you can leave the meeting at any time, but please let us know when you leave. By telling us when you leave, we know that it's your choice and not the result of a bad connection or broadband link.

If you want to read a record of what happened, the minutes of the meeting will be published a week later on the council's website. Any points you have raised in the meeting will be recorded there.

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