

LITTLE OAKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

REMOTE MEETING POLICY

Adopted 10th March 2021 (Minute Number 20/172)

Reviewed 8th March 2023 (Minute Number 22/154)

Next Review Date March 2025

Since 7th May 2021, there has been no requirement or legislation enacted for Little Oakley Parish Council to hold meetings remotely. However, if this situation were to change for any reason, this policy should be followed.

Introduction

Little Oakley Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate and has developed this policy to assist Councillors, officers, members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist people to engage in debate and decision making.

Publishing the agenda and providing documents

Councillors will be summonsed in line with current regulations with an electronic copy of the agenda and documents forwarded as appropriate. In cases where documents originate from a third party, electronic links will be provided where available.

Virtual Meeting 'platform'

Little Oakley Parish Council will utilise an appropriate platform to provide video communications. The platform should enable video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices and desktop personal computers. In preparation for the meeting the Clerk to the Council or the Chairman will provide Councillors with the:

- Meeting link,
- Meeting ID, and
- Meeting passcode as required.

Standing Orders

Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present at a meeting held in the Millennium Room at St. Michael's Church, Ramsey or other specified meeting place.

Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements

- a) Discussions:** During the meeting all persons other than Councillors or officers will be muted. All Councillors attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise and should mute their own microphones, except when speaking, to negate interference with the meeting. During the meeting, Councillors and officers will raise their hand to indicate to the Chairman that they wish to speak on an agenda item. Councillors may also use a Chat facility in platform for the same purpose.
- b) Voting:** All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands.
- c) Poor connectivity:** In the case of poor connectivity the Chairman will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene. In the case of video not being available for some or all of the members attending, the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for Councillor views on individual agenda items.
- d) Attendance:** If a Councillor is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be minuted. If 'drop outs' result in the meeting becoming inquorate members will endeavour to re-join for a period of 15 minutes. If, after 15 minutes, the meeting is still inquorate, the Chairman will suspend the meeting and reconvene at a later time and date subject to the statutory days of notice. Councillors will be telephoned and advised of the suspension.

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders apply with regard to Conduct at Meetings and all attendees are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people experience with regard to the operation of technology. Behaviour that is contrary to the intended outcomes of the meeting will be dealt with at the discretion of the Chairman. For a member of the public or press this may result in them being dismissed from the remote meeting. This includes no alcohol to be consumed

while the meeting is in progress. Councillors are requested to activate the camera if possible, and to remain visible at all times apart from comfort breaks.

Declaration of Interests

A Councillor who has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the 'waiting room'. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made the Councillor will be returned to the meeting.

Public Attendance and Participation

Members of the public wishing to attend the remote meeting must inform the Parish Clerk at least 24 hours before the meeting, who will arrange to send the meeting link and access details not less than two hours prior to the meeting. During the public participation period members of the public will be required to 'enable video' to be visible to the Chairman and will raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. Their microphone will then be unmuted, and they can address the meeting. Following the conclusion of their address their microphone will be muted. Standing Orders in relation to public participation will be followed as if persons were present.

Confidential Matters

When confidential matters are discussed, all persons other than Councillors and officers will be placed in the waiting room and may be re-admitted if required after the confidential matter is concluded.

Information

The chat view box on the meeting will be disabled, except for the sharing of additional information by the Parish Clerk or as directed.

For further information see The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, as amended.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/392/contents/made>