

MORECAMBE TOWN COUNCIL

Remote Meeting Policy

- 1) **Introduction: Morecambe Town 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. The policy is to be delivered within '*The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020*' currently enacted for meetings up to 7 May 2021 if necessary.
- 2) **Publishing the agenda and providing documents:** Councillors are to be summonsed in line with current regulations with the agenda and supporting documents being placed on the Council's website. No agendas will be published on physical noticeboards. Any person unable to access the Council's website must contact the Council and request an electronic copy of the agenda and documents to be forwarded as appropriate. In cases where documents originate from a third party electronic links will be provided where available.
- 3) **Virtual Meeting 'platform': Morecambe Town Council** will utilise Zoom Cloud to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices and desktop personal computers. In preparation for the meeting the Clerk to the Council will provide Councillors with the:
 - Zoom meeting link;
 - Meeting ID, and:
 - Meeting passcode
- 4) **Standing Orders:** Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present at a meeting held at Morecambe Town Hall or other specified meeting place.
- 5) **Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements**
 - a) **Discussions:** During the meeting all persons other than Council Members or officer will be muted. All Councillors attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise and 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 the Chat facility in Zoom 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 members attending the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for Vouncillor 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. After 15 minutes, if 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 to advise of the suspension.

- 6) **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 Zoom meeting.

- 7) **Declaration of Interests:** A Councillor that 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

- 8) **Public Attendance and Participation:** Members of the public wishing to attend the virtual meeting must inform the Town Clerk, who will arrange to send the Zoom 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 the microphone will be muted and their video switched off.

Standing Orders in relation to public participation will be followed as if persons were present.

- 9) **Confidential Matters:** Confidential matters will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting that is available to Councillors only. On conclusion of the non-confidential matters on an agenda the meeting will be suspended for Councillors to re-join using the confidential zoom meeting link that will have been provided to Councillors only.
- 10) **Recording:** Zoom meetings will be recorded and made available to Councillors, the press and members of the public.
- 11) **Information:** The chat view box on the Zoom meeting will be disabled, except for the sharing of additional information by the Town Clerk or as directed.

Policy adopted 2020

For further information see The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020

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