

**CONSTITUTION PART 4**  
**COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**  
**(STANDING ORDERS)**

**STANDING ORDER No. 37**

**REMOTE MEETINGS**

- 37.1 The [Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels \(Coronavirus\) \(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) permit remote attendance at, and remote access to, public meetings held by the Council. The regulations have been put in place pursuant to the Coronavirus Act 2020 to enable council meetings to take place notwithstanding Covid-19 restrictions. The regulations apply to meetings held on or before 7 May 2021. This standing order therefore applies during this period, or if that period is extended, to any extended period. This standing order shall also continue to apply if legislation is made that permits remote meetings generally.
- 37.2 The regulations enable the council to hold meetings without all, or any, of the members being physically present in a room (as required by the Local Government Act 1972). Remote meetings are now lawful and may be held through electronic, digital, virtual locations, live webcast, live interactive streaming, video and telephone conferencing.
- 37.3 The ‘place’ at which the meeting is held may be a council building, or where the organiser of the meeting is located, or an electronic, digital or virtual location, a web address, or a conference call telephone number.
- 37.4 Members will be able to attend meetings of the council remotely. They need not be physically present, provided they are able to hear and be heard (and, where possible, see and be seen by) other councillors and members of the public attending remotely or in person.
- 37.5 A Member in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the

conditions for remote attendance contained in 37.4 are not met. In such circumstance the Chair may, as they deem appropriate;

- (a) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for remote attendance of a Member contained in 37.4 above to be re-established;
- (b) count the number of Members in attendance for the purposes of the quorum; or
- (c) continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the Member in remote attendance.

Any Member who misses any part of an item should always consider whether they should rejoin the meeting if their absence might mean they have missed anything which may be material to their consideration of the matter. This is particularly the case for items considered at regulatory committees.

37.6 The procedure rules in this part of the constitution apply to remote meetings in the same way as they do for other meetings of the council. However, where there is a conflict this Standing Order 37 takes precedence.

## **Procedure**

37.7 The council facilitates remote attendance and access to its meetings using software called Microsoft Teams. This enables:

- (a) Contributions from people, using a wide variety of devices, not all of whom are on the council network.
- (b) Access by both councillors, other participants and members of the public observing the meeting.
- (c) Presentations and documents (maps, plans, etc) to be displayed and spoken to, in conjunction with meeting agendas and reports published on the Council's website.

37.8 In advance of the meeting any agenda item will be published in accordance with usual procedures set out elsewhere in the Constitution.

37.9 Before the meeting, all participants should be made aware of the following requirements:

- (a) Join the meeting no later than fifteen minutes before the start to allow themselves and the meetings facilitator or Democratic Services Officers the opportunity to test the equipment.
- (b) Mute microphones when not talking.
- (c) Switch off cameras when not speaking (to save bandwidth).
- (d) Ensure camera (video-feed) shows 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.
- (e) Only speak when asked to do so by the Chair during the question-time and discussion, or indicate an urgent wish to speak using the chat function.
- (f) Only to speak when invited to by the chair.
- (g) To state their name before speaking.
- (h) If referring to a specific page, slide or paragraph, to state the page, slide or paragraph number.

37.10 The chair, assisted by the democratic services officer and/or chief executive/legal advisor, may at their discretion:

- (a) Pause (adjourn) the meeting by taking down the stream (live feed) from public viewing and then resume it when needed.
- (b) Switch off active participant's microphone when they are finished speaking.
- (c) Mute someone speaking at any time.
- (d) Mute everyone speaking except themselves at any time.
- (e) Allocate different levels of access to people logging in (based on upon whether they are a councillor, an officer, a member of the public who has registered to speak or just an observer of the meeting).
- (f) Switch some active participants and the observers off while the committee deliberates in private or an officer present gives the committee advice. During that time they will be paused and have neither 'live' visual or audio feed. By taking down the live feed content from the public and just displaying a holding slide, decision makers may hold a separate meeting on Teams. The live stream can then be resumed when appropriate.
- (g) Reasonably adapt these rules as appropriate, after taking advice from the chief executive or legal advisor attending the meeting, to ensure the proper and effective conduct of the business of the meeting

## Questions by members of the public

- 37.11 Only questions from the public in accordance with other relevant standing orders (relating to meetings of full council), may be considered at remote meetings.
- 37.12 Special arrangements apply to Planning Committee where members of the public, who have requested to do so prior to the committee, may address the meeting when called upon to do so by the chair. They may speak for 3 minutes or as advised by the chair as set out in the [arrangements for public speaking at Planning Committee](#). Procedures are also in place for relevant people to participate in Licensing Committee, Appeals and Regulatory Committee and Employment and General Committee.
- 37.13 A member of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting is in remote attendance at any time if all three of the following conditions are satisfied, those conditions being that the member of the public in remote attendance is able at that time:
- (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, Members in attendance;
  - (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and
  - (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
- 37.14 A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance contained in 37.14 above are not met. In such circumstance the Chair may, as he or she deems appropriate:
- (a) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for remote attendance contained in Standing Order 5A(a) above to be re-established;
  - (b) 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
- (c) continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.

## **Voting**

- 37.15 Named voting will be used to record votes at remote meetings in place of a show of hands. However, this is not a recorded vote, which can only take place at Council meetings under Standing Order 24.
- 37.16 To record a vote, the clerk will perform an alphabetical roll-call of all members present and ask them to state their voting intention (For, Against or Abstain). These will then be counted and recorded. At the conclusion of the voting the chair shall announce the numbers of votes cast for, against and abstentions and announce whether the motion has been passed or lost. Neither the names of the members nor how they vote will be recorded in the minutes (except under Standing Order 24).

## **Access to information**

- 37.17 The requirement to ensure meetings are open to the public includes access by remote means, including video conferencing, live webcast and live interactive streaming. Where a meeting is accessible to the public through such remote means, the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.
- 37.18 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 shall adjourn the meeting immediately. If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period, then the remaining business will be 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.
- 37.19 Any requirements for the authority to ensure publication, posting or making available a document for inspection at offices of the council include publication on the council's website.

## **Members to maintain confidentiality**

- 37.20 As with physical meetings agenda, items will either be considered in public or in private session. Items to be considered in private under an exemption will be identified on the agenda. Members will vote on this agenda item before proceeding to the next item(s).
- 37.21 When the meeting is dealing with an exempt item or considering an issue in private each Member in remote attendance must ensure and verbally declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (either hearing or seeing) consideration of such items, and/or recording the proceedings. Any Member in remote attendance who failed to disclose that there were in fact persons present who were not so entitled may be found to be in breach of their responsibilities under the Members' Code of Conduct.