

## Remote Meetings at the City of Lincoln Council

Under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 this protocol will apply to virtual meetings of the Council and its committees, until the 7 May 2021.

1. The Council will use video conferencing technology to hold meetings. The platform to be used by the Council is Zoom. These rules modify the Council's standing orders in so far as they facilitate meetings to be held remotely.

### Preparing to start a meeting

2. Members should arrive in the virtual meeting room **at least 10 minutes before the scheduled start** of the meeting, so that connectivity and other matters can be checked, and so that the Chair can make it clear how he or she intends to run the meeting.
3. The dress code for any virtual meeting of the Council or a Committee is 'business as usual'. Members should remain seated and undisturbed as would be the case if attending the meeting in person.
4. Screen backgrounds should be neutral, for example, by choosing a location in front of a plain wall or door. There should be adequate lighting. Novelty virtual backgrounds should not be applied.
5. When entering the meeting, each Member should set their name to display full name. Each Member should include the word 'Councillor' prior to their first name. (Within Zoom the "More" tool is used to amend the displayed name.) The Chair should add their title after their name so it is clear to anyone observing who is chairing the meeting.

### Joining the meeting

6. Members should, if possible, join the meeting and enable **both** video and audio. However, Democratic Services will include in the invitation to Members the UK telephone numbers to be used to dial into the meeting if a Member should experience connectivity problems. Members should make a separate note of the telephone numbers as well as the invitation meeting ID and any passwords, in case of lost connectivity.
7. If a Member does not appear to be able to hear the proceedings then, time permitting, steps should be taken to resolve that issue before the meeting starts. If this happens, Democratic Services will contact the Member directly by telephone or email to offer support to resolve the issue or ensure that they can join the meeting via telephone. If the Member cannot join the meeting after it has already started but joins later, they may do so but may only vote on an item for which they have heard the full debate. If a Member is unable to access the meeting at all, the meeting will still be valid as long as it is quorate.

### During the meeting

8. The chat function should not be used by Members. This is because any chat will be recorded and could be included in any transcript of the meeting as a public document, so should not be used to send private messages between Members. Neither should there be other forms of communication such as WhatsApp, text or emails. The meeting should function in exactly the same way as it would in a physical meeting room.
9. In order to minimise background noise, all Members with the following exceptions will be set to “mute” at the start of the meeting to minimise background noise. Exceptions are the Chair and any Member who is dialled in via telephone. During the meeting, Members should ensure they set themselves to mute when not speaking.
10. If a Member cannot view the proceedings but can hear them, he or she will need to notify the Chair at the start of the meeting. Not being able to view the proceedings will not debar the Member from taking part in the meeting but the Chair and Democratic Services Officer will need to be aware that the Member is participating by audio only. In the case of a Member who can only participate by audio, and if they cannot communicate their intention to speak by other means, then the Democratic Services Officer will unmute them for the duration of the proceedings so that they can indicate when they wish to speak.
11. If a Member loses internet connection, they will be treated as if they have left the room, and the Chair will pause the meeting to allow time for them to either reconnect or to dial in. The Democratic Services Officer will ensure the Chair is aware of anyone losing connection or leaving the meeting, and of their return. If the meeting is quorate, it may continue. The Democratic Services Officer will minute the point of departure in the minutes, and point of return.

### Public participation

12. Members of the public will be able to view and listen to the meetings by going to the link published with the agenda pack for each meeting.
13. Public speakers will be invited to submit representations as a recording which will be played at the meeting using the share screen option. A written emailed representation stating exactly the same as the recording will also be required in case of technical difficulties. This statement if needed will be read out by an officer.

### Voting

14. This will be conducted by show of hands by Members raising their hands physically, to be viewed on screen. Where a Member has had to dial in, the Chair will ask them to confirm verbally how they vote. Where necessary, the Chair will ask each Member to state how they are voting, in the interests of clarity, even if a recorded vote has not been requested. The voting in this case will be minuted as if it had been a show of hands.

### Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

15. Members are reminded that they should read their papers thoroughly in advance of the meeting in order to identify whether they may have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. If a Member is of the opinion that they do have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they should contact the City Solicitor or Democratic Services Officer in order that they can assess the nature of the interest and advise whether or not it will require the Member to leave the meeting.
16. If a Member has declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and is therefore required to leave the meeting during the consideration of the item in respect of which he or she has made the disclosure, they will be required to leave the remote meeting at the relevant point of proceedings. The Democratic Services Officer will telephone the Member immediately at the point they are able to re-join the meeting. The meeting will be adjourned until the Member who declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest re-joins the meeting.
17. If a Member wishes to speak, they should gain the Chair's attention by raising their hand physically. This should be done clearly and the hand kept in view. Neither of the Zoom functions for raising hands ("react" or the blue hand icon) may be used. A Member participating by telephone should say that they wish to speak.

### Exempt or confidential paperwork

18. At a meeting where papers are considered which are exempt from publication, Members should take care the papers are not visible from their screen.