Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council
Standing Orders
March 2021

Appendix 1 – Remote Meetings

REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES
AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allow local councils to hold remote meetings. The regulations give automatic authority to hold remote meetings and amend standing orders as required.

These regulations remain in force until May 7th, 2021 or earlier if repealed and require a number of temporary changes to Standing Orders.

General

This Protocol and Procedures should be read in conjunction with the Council's standing orders.

The Regulations made under s78 of Coronavirus Act 2020 apply and where there is a conflict between these and any other adopted standing orders or legislation, these Remote Meetings Procedures take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.

1) Annual Meeting

The requirement to hold an Annual Meeting of the Council is to be disregarded and prior to May 7th, 2021 may only take place:
   a) where called by the Chair or
   b) following a resolution calling for an annual meeting being passed at an ordinary or extra ordinary meeting of the Council.

2) Access to Information

   a) Where a document is required to be 'open to inspection' this shall include published on the website of the council.

   b) Where a document is required to be published and made available at the council's offices, this shall include published on the website of the council.

   c) Where there is a requirement to publish information including public notices, agendas, minutes, background papers and written reports, this shall include published on the website of the council.

3) Remote Access to Meetings

   a) The definition of meeting within the Council's standing orders is amended so that:
      i. 'place' includes where a meeting is held, or to be held in more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

ii. 'open to the public' includes access to the meeting by remote means including video conferencing, live webcasting and interactive streaming.

iii. where a meeting is accessible to the public through remote means, the meeting is open to the public.

b) If the Council becomes aware that its technology has failed, and the meeting is no longer accessible to the public, the meeting shall be adjourned.

c) If public access cannot be restored within a reasonable period, the remaining business shall be deferred to a future meeting.

4) Councillors in Remote Attendance

a) A councillor in remote attendance is present and counted for the purposes of the quorum when they can:
   i. hear and where practicable see other members of the council.
   ii. hear and where practicable see members of the public wishing to participate during the public session of the meeting or as invited by the Chairman.

b) A councillor 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 at 4a) are not met.

c) Subject to 4 b) the Chairman may if appropriate:
   i. adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established.
   ii. count the number of councillors in attendance for the purpose of the quorum.

5) Remote attendance by members of the public

a) A member of the public is in remote attendance when they can:
   i. hear and where practicable see and so be heard and where practicable seen by members of the council at the meeting.
   ii. hear and where practicable see and so be heard and where practicable seen by other members of the public attending the meeting including those wishing to speak during the public session or as invited by the Chairman.

b) 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 at 5 a) are not met.

c) Subject to 5 b) the Chairman may if appropriate:
   i. adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established.
   ii. vary the order of the agenda or complete the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.

6) Remote Voting

Unless a recorded vote is demanded, the Chair will take the vote by:
   a) confirmation of the meeting that there is agreement or
   b) asking members to raise their virtual hands and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining will be recorded.
   c) A councillor in remote attendance shall not vote on any agenda item for which they are deemed to have left the meeting as per 4a) and 4b).

7) Code of Conduct – councillors excluded from the meeting

Where a councillor is required to leave the room as a requirement of the Council's code of conduct, the means of remote attendance and access will be severed whilst any discussion or vote takes place.

8) Exclusion of the press and public

Where the council has resolved to exclude the press and public from any part of the meeting, due to the confidentiality of the business to be discussed then:

a) The means of remote attendance and access to the meeting by members of the press and public will be severed.
b) Each councillor present shall declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (hearing or seeing), and/or recording the meeting.

9) Disorderly Conduct at Meetings

a) Where any members of the public have joined a meeting to deliberately obstruct the transaction of the business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly, the means of remote attendance and access to the meeting by those individuals will be severed on the instruction of the Chairman.

b) If required, the meeting shall be adjourned and restored following a 5 minute break.

c) If after the meeting has been restored and a similar incident transpires, the remaining business shall be deferred to a future meeting.