

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: County Council – 17 June 2020
Subject: Protocol for Virtual Meetings
Classification: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- (a) In line with provisions in the Coronavirus Act, regulations have come into force giving local authorities the ability to take a more flexible approach to holding meetings.
- (b) However, the core governance requirements for meetings remain. Notice still needs to be given for meetings and the Agendas need to be made available online. The public's right to observe meetings remains the same and so provision needs to be made for the public to hear the discussion and see it where possible as well.
- (c) The regulations are written so that each local authority can tailor their ability to hold virtual meetings to the technology they are able to put into place. Use of the technology needs to ensure the business of the Council can be conducted fairly and without any participant or observer being unduly disadvantaged.
- (d) Formal meetings held virtually are still formal meetings, and while the procedures and rules remain the same as when all Members are present in the same room, it will be a different way of working.

2. Protocols for Virtual Meetings

- (a) Each Committee is being asked to adopt a set of supplementary protocols to guide how virtual meetings will be run. These are geared to explaining how the requirements of the Constitution will be put into effect in a virtual setting.
- (b) Adopting these Protocols will enable Members to have a common point of reference and to understand how business will be conducted. For members of the public observing our virtual meetings, this will improve transparency and understanding of the democratic process.
- (c) A set of Protocols for County Council meetings are attached as an Appendix to this report.

3. Recommendation:

That in order to facilitate the smooth working of its virtual meetings, the County Council agrees to adopt the appended Protocols.

4. Background Documents

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) England and Wales) Regulations 2020 - SI 2020 392, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>

5. Contact details

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