

GREAT LINFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Virtual meeting Policy and Procedures

Doc Number: Version 1

Author: ET

Date:

Approved by:

Date:

Next Review Date:

Document History:

| Version | Description of Changes | Date Effective |
|---------|------------------------|----------------|
| draft1 | Draft for adoption | |
| | | |

1. Introduction

- 1.1. New Regulations¹ came into force in April 2020 and allowed parish councils greater flexibility in how they conduct meetings.
- 1.2. This document provides guidance and procedural steps in how to conduct a virtual meeting.
- 1.3. This document is written as an additional and amended Standing Order for meetings that are required to be held virtually when a crisis impacts on the physical gathering of council and residents. It is valid from 4th April 2020 to the 7th May 2021 and as such is an appendix to the GLPC Standing Orders as agreed March 2020.
- 1.4. This document may be amended over the months up to the 7th May 2021 as the current crisis evolves.

2. Annual Parish Council Meeting

- 2.1. This meeting would normal be held in May and its objective is to elect the Chair, Lead councillors and members to the working groups etc.
- 2.2. The regulations state that there is **no** requirement to hold an Annual Meeting and that if one is delayed/cancelled for this calendar year, all appointments from the 2019 Annual Parish Council meeting continue.
- 2.3. The choice to hold a meeting is that of the Chair or a resolution of the council .

3. Notice of Ordinary Meetings

- 3.1. The 2020 schedule meetings are suspended.
- 3.2. A virtual meeting will be agreed between the Chair and the Parish Manager or deputy. The latter will, as per normal practice generate the agenda, provide appropriate notice of the times of the meeting and details of how to join the meeting.
- 3.3. Notices of the meeting will be published on the GLPC website and other suitable social media channels.
- 3.4. Councillors will receive agendas and additional information via email or other electronic media.

4. Access to meetings

- 4.1. Video conferencing facilities will be provided by GLPC to allow councilors and members of the public and press to remotely attend a meeting.
- 4.2. An alternative audio link or electronic link will be made available if video facilities are not possible to the individual attendee.
- 4.3. Members access will be via a calendar invite which will provide them with the joining instructions and passwords
- 4.4. For public and press joining instructions will be emailed to them once they have registered their interest to attend to observe or have provided questions they wish to submit.

¹ The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and police and Crime Panel Meetings)(England and Wales(Regulation 2020) 4th April 2020

POLICY

- 4.5. Submissions will be read out by the Clerk or Chair during the meeting to facilitate an attendee who cannot attend the virtual meeting

5. Management of virtual meetings for Councillors

- 5.1. The Clerk will take the minutes. A GLPC officer will act as the meeting facilitator they will control the video telephone or conferencing technology used for the virtual meeting. They will monitor attendance and exclusion as instructed by the Chair
- 5.2. Ideally all Councillors should be heard **and** seen at a meeting as audio and visual conferencing is the preferred option of GLPCs virtual meetings. If a member does not have access to video conferencing, they should notify the Chair and Clerk immediately and access the meeting via the audio option.
- 5.3. Before the meeting the Councillors should notify the Clerk/Chair if they are not able to use video conferencing. If during the meeting a councillor has video conferencing issues they should email the glpc@great-linford.gov.uk
- 5.4. **Councillors must indicate their intention to attend a meeting or their reason for absence by 12 noon on the day of the meeting by emailing glpc@great-linford.gov.uk .**
- 5.5. Chair should notify all present that the meeting is to be recorded. If anyone has a concern, they should leave the meeting.
- 5.6. Quorum requirements are still applicable (6 Councillors to attend). Councillors who experience video technology failure during a meeting will be expected to join via audio/telephone. If their absence means the meeting is not quorate the meeting will be stopped. The absent member will have been deemed to have left the meeting at the time noted. Members may re-join and will be duly recorded.

6. Virtual attendance of the Public

- 6.1. A Council meeting is a meeting of the council and not a public meeting. The public are welcome to view the meeting in its entirety but are only invited to make comments about agenda items within the allocated period of Public Participation.
- 6.2. As with Councillors, members of the public or press who wish to participate in the meeting must be able to hear and where possible see others within the meeting.
- 6.3. Members of the public who wish to attend or participate should give advance notice. Any questions or comments they wish to make should be forwarded to the Clerk for circulation to Council **at least 60 hours before the meeting** i.e. if a meeting is Wed at 7pm then comments should be with the clerk by 9am Monday.
- 6.4. The period allocation to public participation will last no more than 15 mins and individual members will have 3 mins to raise their question or make their point. After this period the public will not be entitled to participate further. Council may note the comments and questions and may defer any reply until a future time.
- 6.5. The public will be invited to speak by the Chair at the appropriate time. As with councillors the public are asked to mute their microphones until they are asked to speak
- 6.6. Public representation via correspondence will be circulated to council for their consideration and noted at the meeting. Council may decide what future steps, if any, to pursue with the correspondence but cannot formally resolve an action as it is not a specific agenda item.

POLICY

- 6.7. The public can only speak during the allocated time and any public member interrupting outside of this allocated point may be excluded from the meeting after the Chair has reminded them of the meeting etiquette.

7. Meeting Procedures

- 7.1. The meeting will be recorded, and any recording will be disposed of once the minutes of the meeting have been agreed by the council at the next meeting. Recordings will not be circulated, and the data protection guidance will be adhered to.
- 7.2. Councillors are asked to join the meeting no later than 10 minutes before the start time to ensure the technology is working for all
- 7.3. Councillors are asked to ensure their video background is blurred or non-descript to avoid distraction and their name is included in their video box – by typing in Cllr xx
- 7.4. Councillors should ensure they have agendas and additional information available during the meeting. The additional information will be numbered for Councillors and a PowerPoint presentation of key points will be used to guide the meeting. Councillors are asked to refer to the report or page number when commenting.
- 7.5. Members may join the meeting with videos off and microphones on but after the Chair has completed the greeting and confirmed those present (via a show of hands and / or roll call) Councillors are asked to turn videos off and microphones muted when they are not talking.
- 7.6. The Clerk will note the attendance of Councillors and the notified absence of any Councillors.
- 7.7. As per current Standing Orders the Chair will determine the order of those who are to speak and Councillors will be expected to only speak once on a subject, but the Chair may allow a Councillor to further clarify a point or have a right of reply if it is deemed advantageous to the debate. In a virtual meeting it is even more important that THIS current standing order is adhered to.
- 7.8. The Chair will open the meeting, explain the meeting procedures, the opportunity for public participation and the process for voting. The Chair's decision on meeting process will be final
- 7.9. Agenda items
 - 7.9.1. The Chair or proposer will introduce the agenda item. A seconder will be requested if one has not already been noted on the agenda.
 - 7.9.2. A councillor should notify the Chair that they wish to speak through the chat facility.
 - 7.9.3. Councillors speaking should turn video on and unmute themselves when the Chair invites them. Councillors should state their name before commenting
 - 7.9.4. Only one person to speak at any one time
 - 7.9.5. The Chair will ask if there are any further comments.
- 7.10. Voting
 - 7.10.1. After the agenda item has been sufficiently debated the Chair will invite the vote.
 - 7.10.2. Voting will be carried out by electronic means or the Chair calling each Cllr to state their decision; for, against or abstention. The Clerk will confirm the outcome of the vote.
 - 7.10.3. As per Standing orders the voting record of each councillor will not be kept unless a Recorded Vote has been requested.

POLICY

- 7.10.4. A councillor who has declared an interest at the start of the meeting will be required to leave the meeting. The meeting facilitator will manage the process of removing the member and allowing them to re-enter. Normal interest rules apply to a virtual meeting

8. Exclusions of the public and press

- 8.1. If a confidential item requires the exclusion of the public or press the same priorities prevail and a motion will be required to be proposed and seconded and voted on to allow for the exclusion of the public.
- 8.2. At the point of exclusions, the Chair will thank the public still in attendance
- 8.3. The meeting facilitator will be responsible for removing the public and press
- 8.4. Each councillor must ensure and verbally declare that there are no other persons present in their setting what are not entitled to hear or see the items to be discussed. To be in breach of this order would mean a councillor is in breach of the Code of conduct responsibilities.

9. Access to meeting documentation after the meeting

- 9.1. The public are entitled to access minutes, decisions and other relevant documents through the council's website.
- 9.2. Requests for access to the list of background papers should be via email or post

10. GLPC technology decision

- 10.1. Initially virtual meetings will use the zoom technology.
- 10.2. Councillors may wish to consider using a smartphone with the zoom call to attend the meeting and the use of laptops or pcs to access the information, unless they are comfortable with tabbing between items on one device.
- 10.3. Clerk will provide a PowerPoint slide show of the meeting agenda and main decision points so that Councillors can follow the meeting – this will be removed as Councillors make their comments or ask questions.
- 10.4. Chair, Clerk, or proposer should recap any information shown on the screen
- 10.5. Videos impact on a bandwidth which may impact on the video quality or availability of Councillors to engage

11. Information taken from

SLCC and NALC documentation and

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/remote-council-meetings/video-audio-platforms>