

**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL PROTOCOL FOR REMOTE MEETINGS**

**Background**

- A. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) have enacted provisions which provide flexibility to the Council in the manner which in which they may hold meetings of full council and of the cabinet, and of their committees and sub-committees, and of joint meetings with other authorities.
- B. The Regulations effectively enable the Council to hold meetings which Members may attend by remote attendance.
- C. The Regulations override any prohibition or other restriction in the Council’s standing orders, or any other rules, which would conflict with the provisions of the Regulations.
- D. The Regulations apply until 7 May 2021.
- E. This Protocol sets out the manner in which Slough Borough Council will conduct meetings of the Council, of the Cabinet and of their committees and sub-committees until 7 May 2021.

**Protocol**

General:

- 1. This Protocol shall apply to all and any meetings of the Council, of the Cabinet and of all their committees and sub-committees (“Meeting” or “Meetings”, as appropriate).
- 2. This Protocol shall apply until 7 May 2021 but may be amended by the Council from time to time and at any time, until that date, so far as any amendments are not inconsistent with the Regulations.
- 3. Until 7 May 2021, unless otherwise determined by the Council and the Cabinet respectively, Meetings may be attended by Members by remote attendance and the Council will ensure that the conditions required by the Regulations to enable Members to attend by remote attendance shall apply to all Meetings.
- 4. The Chief Executive shall, issue summonses for Meetings, to be held on such days and at such times as may be stated in the summonses.

Annual Meeting of the Council:

- 5. The annual Meeting of the Council shall be held on Thursday 21 May 2020 at 6.30 p.m.

Notice of Meetings and provision of agenda papers

- 6. Public notices of the times of Meetings, and Agendas, together with details of how to join Meetings by remote attendance shall be available on the Council’s website under the following link by clicking on the page for the relevant Meeting:

<http://www.slough.gov.uk/moderngov/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

7. All agenda papers (except papers relating to confidential or exempt items) will be made available on the Council's website under the following link by clicking on the page for the relevant meeting

<http://www.slough.gov.uk/moderngov/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

8. Members will be notified of Meetings by e-mail and all Agenda papers will be made available to Members on the Council's website or intranet, or by other electronic or other means.
9. Any "place" at which Meetings are held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place, including electronic, digital, or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses, or conference call telephone numbers.

#### Manner of Attendance and etiquette at remote Meetings

10. Members may attend Meetings, including when doing so in exercise of their right under Rule 30 of the Council Procedure Rules to speak when previously notified of permission by the Chair to do so, by remote attendance, by using the videoconferencing facilities provided by the Council from time to time.
11. If that is not possible, Members may attend Meetings by remote attendance by audio link or other electronic means facilitated by the Council which satisfy the conditions in the Regulations for remote attendance.
12. Members shall use all reasonable endeavours to attend meetings by remote attendance. Members are reminded that failure to attend any Meetings for a consecutive period of six months since their last attendance without a reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period shall lead to the Member ceasing to be a Member of the Council, under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.
13. Members shall observe the following etiquette attending meetings by remote attendance:
  - Members should endeavour to join Meetings at least 15 minutes before the start time to enable the Democratic Services Officer to ensure that all equipment and connections are working properly.
  - Any camera (video-feed) should show a non-descript background free of any signs or slogans and Members should take care not to allow any confidential or exempt papers to be seen
  - Members should be mindful of their appearance and should seek to ensure that they are not disturbed or distracted whilst attending Meetings by remote attendance
  - Members should keep their microphones muted when not speaking.
  - Members should only speak when invited to do so by the Chair
  - Only one Member should speak at any one time and if speaking to a diagram, presentation slide or drawing should announce their name whilst doing so
  - Members should, when referring to a specific report, page or slide mention the report, page or slide to ensure all Members are clear on what is being referred to.

#### Remote participation by members of the public and remote attendance by the press and public.

14. Members of the public and the press and Members who are not attending to participate in any Meeting shall be able to attend the Meeting by accessing the Council's webcasting or live audio streaming of Meetings. Instructions on how to access the webcasting or live audio streaming of any Meeting will be given with the public notice of the Meeting.

15. If the Chair becomes aware at any time that the Meeting is inaccessible to Members of the public (except when they have been excluded following a resolution of the Meeting to consider confidential or exempt business) due to any failure in the Council's technology for webcasting or live audio streaming he shall adjourn the Meeting until such access is restored. If such access cannot be restored within a reasonable time the remaining business shall be considered on a day and at a time to be fixed by the chair. If no such date is fixed the remaining business shall be considered at the next ordinary meeting.
16. Any member of the public attending by remote attendance in order to participate in any Meeting, including by way of exercising rights under the Public Participation Scheme for Planning, shall do so by prior arrangement with the Council, by accessing the video conferencing or other facilities provided by the Council. Members of the public may also participate in Meetings by such other means as has been permitted heretofore by, for example, having written statements tabled or read to the Meeting.

#### Conduct of Meetings

17. The Democratic Services Officer or officers attending the Meeting and assisting the Chairman shall control the video, telephone or conferencing technology employed by the Council for remote access and attendance and shall administer the public and Member interaction, engagement and connections, on the instructions of the chair.
18. The Democratic Services Officer shall keep a record of the Members attending the Meeting by remote attendance. Details of attendance by remote means will be published on the Council's website in the same manner as details of attendance in person are presently published, including part attendance, absence and apologies for absence.
19. Members attending by remote attendance who wish to speak during the Meeting shall indicate that wish to the Chair in such manner as shall have been notified to Members by the Chair at the start of the Meeting. It would assist the Meeting if Members who wish to speak on a particular item could indicate their wish to the Chair and to the Democratic Services Officer in advance of the start of the Meeting where possible. Political groups are encouraged to co-ordinate this activity wherever possible in respect of Meetings of the Council and other meetings likely to result in a large number of requests to speak.
- 20.. Unless a recorded vote is called for the method of voting at Meetings will be at the discretion of the chair but may include one of the following methods:
  - a vote by electronic means; or
  - a Democratic Services Officer calling out the name of each Member present with each Member stating "for", "against" or "abstain" to indicate their vote when their name is called, the Democratic Services Officer clearly stating the result before moving to the next item on the agenda, by assent of the meeting

Details of how Members voted will not be kept or minuted unless a recorded vote is called. If a recorded vote is requested the Chair will ask each member in turn to signify verbally whether or not they support the request.

21. If a connection to a Member is lost during a regulatory meeting, the Chair will stop the meeting to enable the connection to be restored. If the connection cannot be restored within a reasonable time, the matter will proceed, but the Member who was disconnected will not be able to vote on the matter under discussion as they would not have heard all the facts.

#### Declaration of Interests

22. Any Member declaring any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or any other interest which would have ordinarily required that Member to leave the room, in any item under consideration at the Meeting, must cease to access the Meeting remotely whilst such item is under consideration. The Democratic Services Officers assisting the Chair at the meeting shall declare that such Member has ceased accessing the Meeting and shall invite the Member to re-join the meeting by e-mail, telephone or other link following the conclusion of the consideration of such item.

#### Exclusion of the Press and Public

23. When confidential or "exempt" matters (as defined in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972) are being considered at Meetings the Democratic Services Officer present and assisting the chair of the Meeting must ensure that there are no members of the public attending the Meeting by remote access or accessing the meeting remotely are able to see or hear the proceedings, once their exclusion has been agreed by the Meeting.
24. Each Member attending the Meeting must ensure that when confidential or exempt matters are being considered, there are no other persons present in their vicinity who are capable of seeing or hearing the proceedings of the Meeting or viewing any documents being considered by the Meeting at such time and must declare this to be the case to the Meeting. Any breach of this requirement will be considered to be a breach of paragraph 2.9 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

#### Public Access to Documents following Meetings

25. Access to minutes, decisions and other documents will be available via the Council's website by clicking on the page for the relevant Meeting under the following link:  
  
<http://www.slough.gov.uk/moderngov/ieDocHome.aspx?>
26. Anyone without access to the Council's website may request copies of minutes, decisions and other relevant documents, including lists of background papers, by telephone using the telephone number 01753 475111 or by writing to Democratic Services, Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2EL.