

LYDIARD MILLICENT PARISH COUNCIL

Virtual Meeting Protocol

1. Introduction

- 1.1. On 4th April 2020 the Government introduced *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020* which allows local councils to meet remotely. These regulations apply to meetings held before 7th May 2021.
- 1.2. In order to meet the regulations, the following conditions must be satisfied. Members in remote attendance must be able:
 - 1.2.a. to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,
 - 1.2.b. to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and
 - 1.2.c. to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
- 1.3. Where this protocol for remote/virtual meetings conflicts with Lydiard Millicent Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders, this protocol will apply.

2. Technology

- 2.1. For the purposes of holding remote meetings, Lydiard Millicent Parish Council will use Zoom Video Conferencing.
- 2.2. Members will advise the Clerk of any technical issues relating to access to these meetings.

3. Preparation for Meetings

- 3.1. The meeting will be advertised on the Council's website and all members and officers due to attend will be issued with a notice and agenda by email. This will be within the usual timeframe for meeting notices.
- 3.2. All non-confidential meeting papers will be available on the Council's website.
- 3.3. Minutes will be taken in the usual way and displayed on the website. Draft Minutes will be adopted at the next meeting in the normal way; the chairman will sign minutes at a future face-to-face meeting with the clerk.
- 3.4. Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, apologies will be submitted and received in the usual way.
- 3.5. The meetings will be open to the public and ways of accessing can be obtained from the clerk.
- 3.6. The same standards of behaviour are applied to remote meetings as to physical meetings.
 - 3.6.a. All members are bound by the Council's Code of Conduct.
 - 3.6.b. Full names of all members, together with their title of Cllr, will be displayed to aid public identification. Officers first name and designation will be displayed
 - 3.6.c. Members of the public will therefore be expected to declare themselves either by having their video switched on or by displaying their own name on their device display if they are not using video. Help will be offered to display their names if assistance is required.
- 3.7. Members, officers and members of the public are asked to be patient with those who are less experienced in such meetings.
- 3.8. Members and officers in attendance at the meeting are reminded to check the background of their video range in order to ensure that

confidentiality, data protection and Code of Conduct requirements are met.

- 3.9. It is possible that technical issues may arise. It may be necessary for the host to request clarification or ask for dialogue to be repeated to make sure everyone can be heard and that they have the correct information for the minutes.
- 3.10. Those in attendance are asked to raise their virtual hands when they wish to speak. Anyone dialling in by telephone will be advised of a word to use to enable them to “raise a hand” vocally.
- 3.11. It may be necessary for members to prepare themselves for the meeting in a different way than usual. Where members do not have access to a printer, it may be necessary to familiarise themselves with the agenda and any reports beforehand.

4. The Meeting

- 4.1. An email invitation, with an explanation of how to access the meeting, will be sent by the Clerk to all members, and those residents who have requested to be kept up to date with such details.
- 4.2. The Clerk of the Council will set up and technically host the meeting. However, at the start of the meeting the Clerk will transfer hosting to the Chair, or if preferred by the Chair, the Vice-Chair, so that the Clerk may concentrate on performing his/her normal duties at the meeting.
- 4.3. Councillors are asked to ensure they are in a place with as little background noise as possible. Once checks have been carried out to ensure that everyone can be heard, all those in attendance are asked to “mute” their microphones until such a time as they are ready to speak. This eliminates background and feedback as well as ensures people are not talking over one another as there can sometimes be a time delay. Where this is not done, the host of the meeting may mute attendees.
- 4.4. It is the policy of Lydiard Millicent Parish Council to use the Zoom recording facility at its meetings.

- 4.5. If a vote is required, those attending by video will be asked to indicate whether they are in favour, not in favour or abstaining by raising their hands as in a face to face meeting; members should continue to raise their hands when voting until advised that counting has been completed. Any members attending by telephone will be asked to express their vote vocally.
- 4.6. Any member requiring a recorded vote must declare this in the same way as detailed in Standing Orders.
- 4.7. If members have difficulty hearing or being heard throughout the meeting, they are asked to advise the Clerk (or Host) via the text “chat” function. Please be aware that the chat area is within the public domain and can be seen by everyone.

5. Public Participation

- 5.1. The agenda will invite the public to attend and will include information of how to access meetings.
- 5.2. The usual public participation session will take place. Members of the public are reminded that the Council cannot make any decisions on matters that do not appear on the agenda. If members of the public have questions about matters not on the agenda, they are requested to contact the Council outside of the meeting.
- 5.3. Once the public participation session has been completed, all the microphones for members of the public will be “muted”. They will be unmuted only when, and if, the Chair of the meeting conducts a vote of the Council to suspend Standing Orders to allow further public participation.
- 5.4. The chair of the meeting will make the decision whether to remove anyone from the meeting who is being intentionally disruptive, using offensive language or incessantly interrupting the meeting proceedings.
- 5.5. Lydiard Millicent Parish Council also ask that as this is a formal Council meeting members of the public refrain from drinking alcohol while they attend each meeting if possible.

5.6. Members are reminded that it is not appropriate to be drinking alcohol whilst taking part in a Council meeting.

6. Relation to other policies and procedures

6.1. The Clerk will ensure that Data Protection requirements are followed when organising remote meetings.

6.2. Members of the Council and members of the public are asked to ensure that they do not breach the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and general confidentiality when they contribute to the meeting.

6.3. Where relevant, the Council's Privacy Notices will be amended to incorporate remote meetings.

6.4. Where relevant, the Council's Risk Assessment will be amended to incorporate remote meetings.

6.5. Destruction of recordings for these meetings are scheduled within the Councils general destruction policy; being after the draft minutes are adopted and signed.

This Protocol was adopted by Lydiard Millicent Parish Council at its meeting held on Thursday 4th March 2021.