



STOKE SUB HAMDON PARISH COUNCIL

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VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 4th April 2020 the government introduced The Local Authorities (Coronavirus (Flexibility of Local Authority meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 to allow local councils to meet remotely. This protocol sets out how Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council will continue to operate during the pandemic.
- 1.2 When Regulations permit, the 'place' where a meeting is held, or to be held, may include references to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations or conference call telephone numbers.
- 1.3 For the purposes of any such meetings, a Councillor (a 'member in remote attendance') attends the meeting at any time if all the conditions in (1.4) are satisfied.
- 1.4 Those conditions are that the member in remote attendance is able at that time:
 - a. to hear and to be heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance
 - b. to hear, and to be 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
 - c. to be heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other member of the public attending the meeting.
- 1.5 Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council is operating on the Zoom platform with all the appropriate security measures.
- 1.6 Guidance on how to use any software necessary for remote attendance at any such meetings will be available on the Council's website

2.0 Planning and Preparation

- 2.1 The meeting will be advertised in the normal manner and an agenda will be issued within the normal time frames.
- 2.2 Minutes will be taken from the meetings and displayed in the normal manner. Minutes will be circulated after the meeting and signed by the Chairman after the meeting. Any paperwork authorizing financial transactions will following the appropriate Resolution be signed by the Chairman after the meeting and handed back to the Clerk.
- 2.3 Apologies need to be given in the normal manner.
- 2.4 The normal required standards of behaviour and discussion must be applied in the same manner as a face to face meeting. Please also be patient with those who are less experienced with this platform. Please also respect confidentiality and do not breach code of conduct, and do not make enquiries about private matters, health, home etc.
- 2.5 There might be technical issues during the meeting and the Parish Clerk or Chair might have to ask for clarification, for dialogue to be repeated in order to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

3.0 Process to Host Meetings for Councillors

- 3.1 The Parish Clerk will act as the Zoom Host and set up the meeting perimeters. An email invitation will be sent to councillors from the Parish Clerk. They need to click on the link and enter the meeting ID number and the password. The Chairman will chair the meeting in the normal way and may be designated Co-host if appropriate.
- 3.2 Before entering the meeting please ensure that you are in a private place where there is little background interference/noise/people. It is difficult to hear on occasions and some might wish to use a headset with a microphone.
- 3.3 On entering the meeting, you will be placed in a waiting room. The Parish Clerk allows access and you will join with your microphone muted. When the Parish Clerk has seen you and can verify you, you will be unmuted.
- 3.4 A check will be done to establish that you can be heard, but then all councillors other than the Chairman and the Clerk will be muted. If the Chairman invites someone to speak they can be unmuted. Please do not interrupt others. If you wish to speak during the meeting, please raise your hand for the attention of the Chairman. When you speak please state your name as you speak for the benefit of those who might not be able to see you.
- 3.5 The meeting will still be chaired in the normal manner and the Chairman will need to ensure that each agenda item is announced in turn, as some will not have access to an agenda for the duration of the meeting (if they do not have a printer).
- 3.6 If there is a vote, please raise your hand until asked to put your hand down. Alternatively, the Chairman will call the name of each attending councillor in turn and ask them how they wish to vote.
- 3.7 If a councillor is deemed to have an interest in a matter and would normally leave a physical meeting, then they will be invited to leave and asked to wait in the 'Waiting Room' to allow discussion to continue without them. The councillor will be invited back into the meeting once the discussion has concluded. This exclusion is at the usual discretion of the Chairman.
- 3.8 If the Council resolves to exclude the public from part or all of a meeting, the Chairman will make a statement to explain the reasons for the public's exclusion. Members of the public will have the choice to log out of the meeting or to be placed in the 'waiting room' to allow discussion to continue without them. Those members of the public in the 'waiting room' will be invited back to the meeting once the discussion has concluded.
- 3.9 If you struggle with hearing during the meeting, please use the Chat Box to type a message which will be seen by the Parish Clerk.
- 3.10 If people speak over others or if there is a time delay and matters are not heard the Chairman will ask for people to repeat and speak in turn. All councillors will have the text number of the Parish Clerk and can send a message during the meeting if they are experiencing issues.

4.0 Public Participation

- 4.1 When the agenda is produced it will invite the public to contact the Parish Clerk by email if they wish to be invited to the meeting. They will be sent an agenda and on the day of the meeting will be sent a link to the meeting, with the meeting ID number and password.
- 4.2 They will be asked to check this link works in advance of the meeting. On arrival at the meeting they will be held in a waiting room and let in against a list of names held

by the Parish Clerk. This is to avoid the entry of unknowns, as experienced in recent weeks at other public meetings where meetings have been disrupted with inappropriate behaviour.

- 4.3 If the public wish to ask any specific questions they will need to have informed the Parish Clerk of this 24 hours before the start of the meeting, by phone or email.

Adopted by Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council on ...1st July 2020.....

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