

YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL



VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This document defines and gives advice regarding the virtual meeting protocol.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This document applies to all Councillors and employees of the Council, and to members of the public and the press who will access Town Council and Committee meetings via zoom.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Yeovil Town Council is operating on the Zoom platform.

4. Planning and Preparation

- 4.1 The meeting will be advertised in the normal manner (i.e. Yeovil Town Council's website and the public noticeboard). In addition, it will be advertised on Yeovil Town Council's Facebook page.
- 4.2 An agenda will be issued within the normal time frames.
- 4.3 Minutes will be taken from the meetings and displayed on the website in the normal manner. Minutes will be circulated after the meeting, agreed as correct at the following meeting and signed when the council finally meets face to face.
- 4.4 Apologies must be given in the normal manner.
- 4.5 The public are invited to observe the meeting. If they have a comment or a question to raise, they have been asked to submit it in advance of the meeting (by 9 am of the day of the meeting).
- 4.6 The normal required standards of behaviour and discussion must be applied in the same manner of a face to face meeting. These are laid out within Yeovil Town

Council's Standing Order. Please also be patient with those who are less experienced in this platform. Please also respect confidentiality and do not breach the code of conduct, and do not make enquiries about private matter, health, home etc.

- 4.7 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 be asked to wait in the virtual waiting room, where they will be invited back into the meeting, once it is time to move to next item of business on the agenda.
- 4.8 There might be technical issues during the meeting and the Town Clerk might have to ask for clarification, for dialogue to be repeated in order to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

5. Process to host meetings for Councillors

- 5.1 The Town Clerk will host the meeting and set up the meeting perimeters. An email invitation will be sent to Councillors from the Town Clerk. They need to click on the link and enter the meeting ID number and the password (if required).
- 5.2 The Chairman will be set as a co-host.
- 5.3 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. You may also wish to consider what is on show in the background of the place you are sat.
- 5.4 On entering the meeting, you will be placed in a waiting room. The Town Clerk allows access and you will join with your microphone muted.
- 5.5 A check will be carried out 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 Clerk. When you speak please state your name as you speak for the benefit of those who might not be able to see you.
- 5.6 The meeting will still be chaired in the normal manner. The Town Clerk might have a greater input to guide the meeting to the next item, as some will not have access to an agenda for the duration of the meeting (if they do not have a printer).
- 5.7 If there is to be a vote, please clearly raise your hand until asked to put your hand down.

- 5.8 If you struggle with hearing during the meeting, please use the chat box to type a message which will be seen by the Town Clerk.
- 5.9 If people speak over others or if there is a time delay and matters are not heard the Town Clerk will ask for people to repeat, and to speak in turn. All Councillors have the text number of the town clerk and can send a message during the meeting if they are experiencing issues.

6. Public Participation

- 6.1 When the agenda is produced it will invite the public to contact the Council by email if they wish to make a comment or ask a question to the meeting. The comment or question will need to be submitted in writing (by 9am on the day of the meeting) and the Town Clerk will read the comment or question on behalf of the public.
- 6.2 The public are also invited to view the meeting and should also contact the Council via email. They need to have done this by 9am on the day of the meeting. They will be sent a link to the meeting.
- 6.3 It will be the public's responsibility 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 Town Clerk. This is to avoid the entry of unknowns, as experienced in recent weeks at other public meeting where meetings have been disrupted with inappropriate displays of behaviour. The public viewing the meeting will be muted and will have video access removed.
- 6.4 The procedure for public participation will differ for the Planning Committee. Those wishing to speak at the Planning Committee will need to notify the Council by email by 9am on the day of the meeting. They will need to provide information such as the plan they wish to comment on, and the stance they are taking on the planning application. They will be sent a link to the meeting. Again, it will be their responsibility to check this link works in advance of the meeting. On arrival to the meeting, they will be held in the waiting room and let in when the plan of interest is being discussed. Once that plan has finished, they will be returned to the waiting room.

Yeovil Town Council

Agreed: July 2020
To be reviewed: January 2021