



REMOTE / PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL

This protocol has been devised as a result of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ('the Regulations')¹ to provide guidance for the conduct of any remote meeting of the Council, and its various Committees and Sub-Committees, held under the provisions of the Regulations and subsequent changes to the Constitution.

Remote meetings are virtual in that the meeting is conducted at no specific location and participants are at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online. There is also the opportunity for the public and press to listen and view proceedings.

The Council's adopted Constitution will continue to apply to meetings of the Council, and its various Committees and Sub-Committees, but where there is a conflict the Constitution takes precedent.

In the event that a remote or part remote and physical meeting takes place then the Protocol will apply.

The means that remote access will be provided:

1. Agendas will continue to be published as usual using the Mod.Gov committee management system.
2. Members and the public registered to take part in a meeting will be required to use the video conferencing facility adopted by the Council to attend a meeting remotely (unless part remote/ physical meeting applies). Remote access will be via a meeting invitation sent directly to a Member's NHDC email address, or for public that have registered to participate, to the specified email address. The meeting invitation should not be shared. If joining a meeting via video conference it is expected that Members are always visual and the public are visual at the relevant point of the agenda, or where requested to confirm attendance.
3. If video conferencing is not possible, the meeting invitation will also include a telephone number so that attendance may be through an audio link using the same conferencing facility.
4. Remote access for members of the public and Members who are not attending to participate in the meeting, including the press, can view the meeting via the NHDC You Tube channel. The link to the You Tube channel is available via the Council's website, where agendas are available.
5. If technology fails for a wholly remote meeting, and the meeting is no longer open to the public, the Chair will immediately adjourn the meeting to allow for connection to be re-established.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>



6. If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period (20 minutes), then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If the Chair does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

Management of Remote Meetings

7. If for any reason the meeting is not quorate an Officer will notify attendees by interjecting at the meeting. The meeting will adjourn immediately. Once the meeting is quorate the meeting will resume. If connection cannot be restored within a reasonable period, then 6 above applies.
8. If a remote Member loses connection the Chair may adjourn the meeting for a short period to enable connection to be re-established.
9. If the Chair does not adjourn the meeting the Member will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure and be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.
10. Only Members present for the entirety of debate and consideration of an item are entitled to vote. In the case of 9 above a Member will not be able to vote on that item.

Remote Attendance of the Public

11. A member of the public wishing to speak at a meeting must comply with the requirements to register as per Sections 4 and 8 of the Constitution (and any regulatory meeting procedures for Planning, Licensing, and Standards Sub-Committee meetings).
12. It is advisable to submit a representation in writing to the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer prior to the meeting. In the event that the member of public is unable to access the conferencing facility provided by the Council, and a representation has been received, this will be read out by the Chair or an officer in attendance.
13. The scope of presentations/questions must comply with that as stipulated within the Council's Constitution.
14. If technology fails for a member of the public who attends to participate (speak at the relevant time) and is unable to do so, the Chair may decide to adjourn or proceed to the next item of business to allow for connection to be re-established. If connection cannot be restored within a reasonable period, the Chair can decide to conclude the remaining business.

Meetings Procedure

15. Prior to the commencement of a meeting the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer/Manager will confirm that the meeting is being streamed live.



16. The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer/Manager will at the beginning of the meeting, and at the reconvening of a Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meeting, confirm that they can see and hear all participating Members and, if applicable, members of the public.

Etiquette for Members, Officers, the public and press

17. Any person attending the meeting remotely should join the meeting no later than fifteen minutes prior to the start to allow sufficient time to test connection.
18. When joining the meeting input your name in full, e.g. Cllr Joanne Smith, Mr Joseph Smith. Titles should be shown (if a Chair, Vice Chair, the Leader or an Executive Member, Ward Advocate or Officer). For a meeting of a committee, the Members of the committee should include after their name "Committee Member" (so that a member of the public can distinguish voting Members from other non-Committee Members who may have registered to speak as a ward Member, or who may have obtained the consent of the Chair to attend.) Anyone addressing the Committee as a registered public speaker should include this after their name.
19. Please follow the same principles for a remote meeting in regard to the manner in which you conduct yourself and wear appropriate clothing, as if the meeting was being conducted within the Council Chamber. Remember to stay in view of the camera and that everything you do can be seen, such as leaving your seat/ room, talking to other members within the household, eating, texting.
20. It is advisable to wear headsets as this can help to reduce any feedback. Noise cancelling headphones assist with reducing background noise.
21. Please ensure that your mobile phone and other noise emitting devices are muted.
22. Please activate the mute button on the device when you are not speaking.
23. Any visual background should be non-descript or, where possible, a virtual or blurred background.
24. Be careful to prevent exempt or confidential papers being seen within the video-feed - consider the position of the camera angle, including a clear front view of your face.
25. When a meeting is in private session there should not be anyone in the room that is not entitled to be present.
26. You will be invited to address the meeting by the Chair - please show respect to each other and do not talk over someone who is already speaking or interject uninvited.
27. Don't forget to unmute yourself when you are invited by the Chair to address the meeting.
28. The procedure as set out in the Constitution regarding 'Disturbance by the public' and 'Members' conduct' will be followed.



29. Please refrain from using a 'reaction' tool on the social media platform.²

Rules of Debate

30. If a Member wishes to speak they should use the raise hand function and this will alert the Chair of the wish to speak. The host will inform the Chair of the name/s of the speakers, who should wait to be invited by the Chair to address the meeting.
31. The normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak will apply as per the Constitution:
- No speeches may be made after the mover has moved a proposal and explained the purpose of it until the motion has been seconded.
 - When seconding a motion or amendment, a Member may reserve their speech until later in the debate.
 - No speech should exceed five minutes without the consent of the Chair.
 - The mover of an amendment has no right of reply.
32. If a Member has a closure motion, personal explanation or point of order, the Member may interject the meeting at an appropriate time by saying 'Chair I have a point of order/personal explanation' or by stating the closure motion. Wait for the Chair's invitation to address the Committee.
33. If a Member has declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and is therefore required to leave the meeting during the consideration of an item, they will be placed in a breakout room. It is the responsibility of the Member in question to remind the Chair at the start of such item. The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer/Manager will remind the Chair to re-admit the Member at the conclusion of the item in question.

Member Voting

34. When satisfied that there has been sufficient debate the Chair will request that the host confirms that all 'raised hands' have been cleared following which the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer/Manager will read out the recommendation that Members will be voting upon. Members will need to use the tools within the "Participants" function to vote using a green tick to indicate 'for', a red cross to indicate 'against', or the "raise hand" tool (which raises a blue hand) to indicate an abstention. Where a Member has had to dial into the meeting by telephone, the Chair will ask for verbal confirmation as to how they wish to vote. Leave the vote in situ until told otherwise by either the Chair or Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer/Manager.
35. The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer/Manager will clearly state the result of the vote and the Chair will then move onto the next agenda item.
36. Details of how Members voted will not be kept or minuted unless a Recorded Vote is requested or an individual requests that their vote be recorded, although the voting will be

² To avoid confusion with the method of voting, separate to this area.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



seen on the video recording of the meeting (and heard if a Member has joined the meeting by audio means).

37. In the event of a tied vote the Chair will have the casting vote.