



# **Lyneham and Bradenstoke Parish Council**

## **Protocol for Virtual Meetings**

*This protocol has been drawn up in accordance with Wiltshire Associations of Local Councils guidance.*

**This protocol was adopted by  
Lyneham and Bradenstoke Parish Council**

**On**

**Xx xxxx 2020**

**The protocol will cease on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021\*.**

Unless it has been amended by legislation issued by the UK Government and then readopted by the Parish Council.

*\* this protocol will cease should the relevant Statutory Instruments be revoked by the UK Government.*



## **1. Introduction**

1.1. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allows local councils to meet virtually or remotely.

1.2. These regulations apply to all virtual meetings held before 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

1.3. In order to meet the regulations, the following conditions must be satisfied. Members in virtual attendance must be able:

- to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,
- to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
- to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any invited members of the public permitted to attend the meeting in order to speak at the meeting during public participation.

1.4. Invited members of the public permitted to attend the meeting to speak during the public participation session, is normally restricted to the member of Wiltshire Council for Lyneham Ward, Military Liaison, invited members of the public speaking on behalf of grant applications, members of the public invited to talk regarding contracts or works and members of the public invited to speak or provide advice on any technical matter relating to agenda items.

1.5. All other members of the public wishing to raise questions or make representation on agenda items may do so in accordance with section 5 of this protocol.

## **2. Technology**

2.1. For the purposes of holding virtual meetings, Lyneham and Bradenstoke Parish Council will use Microsoft Teams Video Conferencing Platform.

2.2. Appropriate guidance on how to use the video-conferencing platform will be circulated to all members and officers and will be publicly available on the Council's website.

2.3. Members or officers will advise the Parish Clerk or Event Organiser of any technical issues relating to access to virtual meetings as soon as they become apparent.

## **3. Preparation for Meetings**

3.1. Virtual meetings will be advertised on the Council's website and all members and officers due to attend will be issued with a notices and agendas by email. This will be within the usual timeframe for meeting notices.

3.2. All non-confidential papers will be available on the Council's website.



3.3. Draft minutes will be circulated after a virtual meeting and signed at the first physical meeting once restrictions have been lifted.

3.4. Where a member is unable to attend a virtual meeting, apologies will be submitted and received in the usual way. Members are reminded that the Local Government Act 1972 s85 still applies.

3.5. The virtual meetings will be open to the public and ways of accessing the meeting will be explained on the agenda (or on the meeting notice).

3.6. The same standards of behaviour are applied to virtual meetings as to physical meetings. All members are reminded that they are still bound by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.

3.7. Members and officers in attendance at virtual meeting are reminded to check the background of their video range in order to ensure confidentiality, data protection and Code of Conduct requirements are met.

3.8. It is possible that technical issues may arise during virtual meetings. It may be necessary for the Parish Clerk 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.

3.9. All members at the end of a presentation for an agenda item will be asked in turn if they wish to ask any questions or request clarification of any points, and they may direct their questions to any other named member.

3.10. Where a councillor has a declared or apparent interest in a matter and would normally leave a physical meeting for that item, they will still be required to exit a virtual meeting. They will be advised by message (by the Parish Clerk or Event Organiser) when they can return to the virtual meeting, and the virtual meeting will not proceed until the member has re-entered or notified they do not wish to re-enter the virtual meeting.

3.11. It may be necessary for members to prepare themselves for virtual meetings 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. The Event Organiser will set up and technically host the virtual meeting. An email invitation, with an explanation of how to access the meeting, will be sent to all members.

4.2. 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 in attendance 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 virtual meeting may mute attendees.



4.3. Whilst the Event Organiser is hosting the virtual meeting, it will be chaired in the usual manner. There is a possibility that there will be more input from the Parish Clerk than is usual given that, where members do not have access to a printer, it is possible that they will not be able to use the computer video function and look at the agenda and/or supporting papers at the same time.

4.4. The virtual meeting will be recorded (via the video conferencing platform itself). This is to aid the writing of minutes in a situation where the minute-taker is involved with technical aspects of the meeting as well as for openness and transparency.

4.5. A copy of the virtual meeting recording will, where possible, will be made available for at least 14 days after the virtual meeting via a link on the Parish Council website.

4.6. If a vote is required, those attending by either by video or by dial-in, will be asked in turn to verbally confirm their vote, stating support, object or abstain. The Parish Clerk will record the vote for inspection, until the minutes of the meeting are physically signed.

4.6. If you have difficulty hearing or being heard throughout the meeting, you are asked to advise the Event Organiser by phone as soon as possible. You will be advised of the number to call shortly before a virtual meeting.

## **5. Public Participation**

5.1. The agenda will invite the public to attend and will include information of how to view virtual 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.

5.3. Members of the public may raise questions on any agenda item either by writing to the Parish Clerk at the address notified on the agenda, or to the email notified on the agenda, no later than 5pm the day before a virtual meeting.

5.4. All questions asked, along with name of the person asking the question will be published on the Parish Councils website before the start of the virtual meeting.

5.5. If members of the public have questions about matters not on the agenda, they are requested to contact the Council outside of the meeting.

5.4. The meeting host may remove anyone from the meeting who is being intentionally disruptive, using offensive language or incessantly interrupting the meeting proceedings.



## **6. Relation to other policies and procedures**

6.1. The Parish Clerk and the Event Organiser will ensure that Data Protection requirements are followed when organising virtual 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.

## **7. Other matters**

7.1. Members, officers and members of the public are asked to be patient with those who are less experienced in such meetings.

7.2. On advice from the relevant authorities, the Parish Council may be permitted to revert to physical meetings or may be required to continue to hold virtual meetings or change between two formats at short notice.