

CRAVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL



Introduction

This Protocol and accompanying Supplemental Council Procedure Rule (CPR.28) set out the procedure and guidance for the conduct of remote meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees, held under the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (the Regulations).

They apply until the **7th May 2021**.

1.0 Annual Meeting

- 1.1 Holding an Annual Meeting during the 2020/2021 municipal year is not mandatory.
- 1.2 Whether to hold an Annual Meeting will be a political decision. The Chairman may call for a meeting, either later in the municipal year, or at the start of the 2021/2022 municipal year.
- 1.3 Some Members may still wish to call for an Annual Meeting and this can be done by passing a resolution at an ordinary or extraordinary meeting of Council.
- 1.4 Where the Annual Meeting is delayed, all appointments from the 2019 Annual Meeting continue.

2.0 Notice of Meetings

- 2.1 The calendar of meetings agreed by Council may be changed. Re-arranged meeting dates will be agreed with Committee Chairs and Members notified accordingly.

- 2.2 The proper officer (Democratic Services Manager) will give the requisite notice to the public of the time of a meeting and the agenda, together with details of how to join the meeting will be available on the Council website www.cravendc.gov.uk/
- 2.3 Members will be notified of a remote meeting by email and all agenda papers will be available on the Council website or other electronic means as appropriate. Members of the public may access agenda papers, minutes, and other relevant documents through the Council website. Paper copies of agendas will be available to Members on request (but no less than 7 days before a meeting).
- 2.4 The '*place*' at which the meeting is held will be shown as 'online only' on the agenda summons. Meetings will be accessed via a link for those participating, or may be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel for those wishing to observe.

3.0 Access to Remote Meetings

- 3.1 Members and members of the press and public will need to use video conferencing link provided by the Council to attend a meeting remotely. Democratic Services will be responsible for setting up and operating the technical aspects of remote meetings.
- 3.2 If this is not possible, attendance may be by telephone as referred to in Regulation 5(6)(c) of the Regulations, but this should only be used by Members where video conferencing is not practicable.
- 3.3 Remote access for members of the press and public and Members who are not attending to participate in the meeting, will be provided through a live webcast on the Council's YouTube channel. A link will be provided on the published agenda.
- 3.4 If technology fails for a wholly remote meeting and the meeting is no longer open to the public, any decisions made could be challenged as unlawful.
- 3.5 It is important to note that the public accessing the meeting by remote means, as described here, is different from the public attending to exercise a right to speak. A technological failure on behalf of the Council, or software or internet provider to the Council, removing the ability for the public to access the meeting by remote means renders the whole meeting incapable of proceeding (as described above).
- 3.6 When a member of the public notifies Democratic Services (by email committees@cravendc.gov.uk) that they wish to attend the meeting to exercise their rights under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, they should also submit their statement in written form to Democratic Services by 12 noon on the last working day before the meeting. If there is a failure of the technology and the member of the public is unable to speak at the meeting or

if they fail to log or dial into the meeting, their statement will be read out by the Democratic Services officer instead. The item can then proceed.

- 3.7 Where a member of the public attends a meeting of the Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committee to take part in a hearing and is unable to do so due to a technological failure, that item cannot proceed.
- 3.8 Where a member of the public is invited to take part in a meeting of the Select Committee but is unable to do so, the Chair of Select Committee will determine whether the item can proceed or should be adjourned until such time as the member of the public can join the meeting.

4.0 Management of Remote Meetings

- 4.1 Any Member participating in a meeting remotely must, when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and if possible, seen) by all other Members in attendance, and he or she must in turn, be able to hear (and if possible, see) those other Members participating.
- 4.2 In addition, a remote participant must be able to be heard by and in turn hear, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting and who exercise a right to speak at the meeting.
- 4.3 The Chair will confirm at the start of the meeting that they can see and hear all participating Members. Any Member participating remotely should also confirm that they can see and hear the proceedings and the other participants. This will be done by way of roll call of Committee Members carried out by the Democratic Services officer, who will record attendance.
- 4.4 The quorum requirements for meetings as set out in the Council's Constitution will also apply to a remote meeting.
- 4.5 Should any aspect of an individual Member's remote participation fail, the Chair will call a short adjournment of up to five minutes to determine whether the connection can quickly be re-established, either by video conferencing or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting should continue to deal with the business, **provided** the meeting remains quorate and the public are able to hear. If the meeting is not quorate without the Member whose connection has failed, the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.
- 4.6 In the event of connection failure, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the time of failure.
- 4.7 If the connection is successfully re-established, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment. The Member who was disconnected will not be able to vote on the matter under discussion at the time of connection failure because they will not have heard all the debate.

- 4.8 If the Chair is made aware that the meeting is not accessible to the public through remote means, due to any technological or other failure, then the Chair shall adjourn the meeting immediately. If access through remote means cannot be restored within 15 minutes, the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

5.0 Remote Attendance of the Public

- 5.1 Any member of the public participating in a meeting remotely to exercise a right to speak must, when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and if possible, seen) by all Members in attendance and in turn, be able to hear (and if possible, see) those Members and also be heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.
- 5.2 Advance notice from members of the public wishing to speak at a meeting will be required by emailing committees@cravendc.gov.uk. For those items of business, an invitation to participate will be sent in advance of the meeting.
- 5.3 The Democratic Services officer will be able to mute the member of the public once they have spoken and also to remove them from the remote meeting on the instruction of the Chair, in order to maintain the good administration of the meeting or to retain order.
- 5.4 Failure of the remote meeting technology should, whenever possible, not disadvantage members of the public in remote attendance. Failure of the technology affecting members of the public attending to exercise a right to speak, will be dealt with as set out in section 3 above. If technology fails and the meeting is no longer open to the public, the whole meeting is incapable of proceeding, also as set out above.

6.0 Meeting Procedures

- 6.1 In addition to the Democratic Services officer responsible for the meeting, a second Democratic Services officer will act as a meeting facilitator to control and monitor the technology and administer the public and Member interaction on the instruction of the Chair.
- 6.2 It would assist with the smooth running of the meeting, if Members wishing to speak on an item could advise the Chair and Democratic Services officer in advance of the meeting where possible.
- 6.3 The Chair will follow the Council Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution when determining who may speak, the order and priority of speakers and the content and length of speeches in the usual way. The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.

7.0 Meeting Etiquette

- 7.1 During remote attendance at a meeting, Members are asked to adhere to the 'Remote Council and Committee Meetings Etiquette' attached as Appendix 1.

8.0 Voting

- 8.1 When the Chair is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate and, if the rules of the meeting require, there is a proposer and seconder for the item being discussed, the Chair will proceed to the vote as follows.
- 8.2 The Democratic Services officer will call out the name of each member present. Members will state 'for', 'against' or 'abstain' to indicate their vote when their name is called. The Democratic Services Officer will state the result of the vote.
- 8.3 Details of how Members voted will not be recorded in the minutes unless a Recorded Vote is called in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4.

9.0 Declaration of Interests

- 9.1 Any Member participating in a remote meeting who declares a disclosable pecuniary interest or other declarable interest, in any item of business that requires them to leave the room must also leave the remote meeting. Their departure will be confirmed by the Democratic Services officer. The Democratic Services officer will invite the Member to re-join the remote meeting at the appropriate time.

10.0 Exclusion of Public and Press

- 10.1 Council meetings are not open to the public and press when confidential or 'exempt' issues (as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) are being considered. Where possible, such items will be considered once all 'open' items have been considered. Once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting, the Democratic Services officer will close the publicly accessible remote meeting and circulate a new link to the meeting to be held in exempt session.
- 10.2 Each Member and officer in remote attendance must ensure and declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be hearing or seeing consideration of such items and/or recording the proceedings.
- 10.3 Any Member in remote attendance who fails to disclose that there were persons present who were not entitled to be so, would be in breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

11.0 Recording of Meetings

- 11.1 All meetings will be recorded by the Council. Recordings will be retained securely for a period of six years.

Appendix 1 – Remote Council and Committee Meetings Etiquette

Appendix 2 – Supplemental Council Procedure Rule No. 28