

Remote Meetings - Standing Order Pointers

Because of different platforms being used by councils for remote meetings, it is difficult for us to write a set of bespoke standing orders. The suggestions below, if adopted, should be applied alongside the council's existing standing orders.

Key:

Bold text – mandatory (defined in legislation);

Ordinary text – Suggested standing order wording;

Italic text – Suggestions for councils to think about depending on the platform being used.

ADDENDUM TO CALVER PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS FOR VIRTUAL/REMOTE MEETINGS USING ZOOM

INTRODUCTION:

The following Standing Orders are an addendum to the Standing Orders (SOs) for Calver Parish Council to enable the effective management of meetings held remotely using the ZOOM platform due to the Coronavirus pandemic; in all other matters, Calver Parish Council's SOs apply.

CONVENING

a. A remote meeting of the Council or of one of its committees will be convened in accordance with Paragraph 10 of the Local Government Act 1972.

b. The council will ensure that all non-confidential meeting papers are posted on its website and where possible, on the website of the principal authority for its district area.

CHAIMAN'S ROLE:

All meetings shall commence with a statement from the council Chairman, outlining the procedures to be undertaken to hold a lawful and effective remote meeting and will highlight the requirement for all councillors and non-councillors with voting rights to observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council.

PRESENT:

Councillors are deemed present for the purposes of any remote meeting, when they can speak, hear, and be heard (and where practicable see and be seen) by all those in attendance (whether by video conferencing or by telephone).

Where the council has taken reasonable measures to provide guidance and support to a councillor to join a remote meeting, but that member is experiencing difficulties that are outside of the control of the council, the lack of attendance of the member shall not invalidate a properly convened and quorate meeting

All councillors present will be required to state their name prior to the commencement of the meeting.

QUORUM:

No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three.

If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting.

VOTING:

Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting.

The chairman of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his casting vote whether or not he gave an original vote.

At the request of a councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.

Points to consider when drafting how voting is defined:

- How will members vote? **By either waving/raising their hand or using the Zoom hand icon**
- Is there a 'raise my hand' facility on the platform being used? **Yes**
- How will those joining the meeting by telephone 'raise their hand'? **By verbally announcing to the meeting Chair**
- The clerk/vice-chairman may be required to note the those with their 'hands raised' **Yes**

Example Standing Order: (where members are joining the meeting by telephone):

The chairman will request a response to each proposal verbally, from each member present.

The chairman will confirm that response verbally.

The chairman will read out all votes cast once collected.

The minutes will reflect the decision of the council.

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

Points to consider when drafting (how council discussion will take place):

- How will members make it known to the Chairman their wish to contribute to the discussion? **By raising their hand/waving or using the hand icon**
- Is there a 'raise my hand' facility on the Platform being used? **Yes**
- How will those joining the meeting by telephone 'raise their hand'? **By verbally announcing to the meeting Chair**
- The clerk/vice chairman maybe required to note the those with their 'hands raised' **Yes**

Example Standing Order:

On each item of business to be transacted, which requires discussion (where members are joining the meeting by telephone):

- The rules of debate, as set out in Calver Parish Council Standing Orders will apply.
- The Chairman will ask each member, in turn, whether he/she wishes to contribute to the discussion.
- After each member has been heard, the Chairman will call for a proposal on the item of business to be transacted, by a member present (member to state their name prior to making the proposal)
- Once a proposal is moved, if required, the Chairman will call for that proposal to be seconded by a member present (member to state their name prior to speaking)
- The Chairman will request any amendments to said proposal from each member present, prior to moving to a vote on that proposal.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN AN ITEM OF BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED AT THE MEETING:

A councillor or a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on his right to participate and vote on that matter.

Points to consider when drafting:

- What actions are required by the council's existing Standing Orders when a member makes a declaration regarding a DPI or other interest? **That she/he will withdraw from the meeting room while the item is under consideration**
- What facility does the platform being used have for members present 'leaving' and 'returning' the meeting? **Zoom – allows a Councillor with a DPI to be placed in the waiting room and cannot be seen nor see or hear the Council's deliberations and voting on the item under consideration. Following its determination they can be brought back in to the meeting from the waiting room**
- How will the member know when to 'return' to the meeting – how will he/she be invited back to the meeting? **The meeting host (Chair) will place them in the waiting room and re-admit them to the meeting after the item has been determined**
- How will any action taken by the member be confirmed by the Chairman to those present? **Councils need to draft their own standing order as the content will depend on the platform being used. The Chair will provide a verbal account of the steps being taken as set out above for the benefit of all attendees in the virtual meeting**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Points to consider when drafting:

- It is expected that if the council normally facilitates public participation at its meeting
- How will the members of the public demonstrate their intention to speak?

Example Standing Order:

The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 10 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting; a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.

The Chairman will ask each member of the public, joining the meeting by telephone, if they wish to contribute to this session.

Members of the public joining the meeting by video link shall use the 'raise my hand facility' or physically raise their hand – the clerk/vice-chairman will make a note of these and they will be invited to speak by the chairman.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

All meetings of the council and its committees must be available for the press and public to attend (i.e. open to the public).

The council or a committee may resolve to exclude the press and public, from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings), due to publicity of the matter being prejudicial to the public interest, by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons.

Points to consider when drafting:

- *The council needs to ensure that the press and public cannot hear or see the proceedings.*
- *How this is provided for in these Standing Orders is dependent on the platform the council is using:*

If the platform being used allows the council to remove people from the meeting, this facility can be used (i.e. once the council has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting the host (clerk/RFO) will remove members of press and public from the meeting. Zoom allows members of the public to be placed in the “waiting room” for any excluded agenda item.

If not, the council could continue the meeting by going into a fresh remote meeting link. Remember though that this is a continuation of the original meeting; the original meeting has not ended until the confidential business is dealt with.

- *It is advisable to place all matters which may require consideration after exclusion of the press and public at the end of the list of business to be transacted at that meeting (agenda) but remember, all such matters must be specified on that agenda*

Remember to carefully minute the decisions coming out of the ‘confidential’ part of the meeting in the meeting minutes.