

Sandford St Martin Parish Council Virtual Meeting Procedure

Adopted by Sandford St Martin Parish Council on 17 March 2022
Last approved on 16 March 2023

Introduction

From 04 April 2020 until May 2021, Parish Councils were given provision under *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 2020 Regulations”) to hold legal virtual meetings in order that Parish Council business can be maintained.

This policy is to be followed if Parish Councils are once again permitted to hold legal virtual meetings.

Platform

The Council has approved the use of the Zoom platform to hold its virtual meetings. This will allow meetings to be available to the public. The Clerk will Host the meetings using the Parish Council paid account.

Meeting Notification

Meetings will be formal Parish Council meetings and will be held using the agenda and summons which the Clerk has published. They will be governed by the Council’s Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and associated policies.

A code and link to the virtual meeting will be published on the agenda in order that the public are able to attend, just as they would be able to attend a meeting in the Parish Hall.

Attendees will also have the ability to dial in to the meeting via telephone.

Meeting Format and Structure

Attendees will collect in the Zoom “waiting room” prior to the meeting.

All attendees will be set to “mute” on entry to the meeting, and only the Chairman of the meeting will remain unmuted. All other participants, if they wish to speak, will be invited to unmute. The Clerk will have the ability to mute anyone who forgets.

As the “Host”, the Clerk will have the ability to mute or remove anyone deemed a nuisance at the Chairman’s request.

All Councillor attendees will display their name in order for the public to be able to identify them.

If a Councillor has declared an interest in an item on the agenda, they will be placed in the waiting room for the duration of the agenda item. Once the item has been concluded, they will be re-admitted to the meeting.

In order to protect participants from malware, the “chat”, file sharing and screen sharing function will be disabled for participants other than the Clerk during the meeting. If necessary, the Clerk will display any documents required using the “share screen” function.

The Council will have the facility to use the “Record” facility within Zoom if required.

Any Councillor wishing to participate in an item should raise their hand using the “raise hand” in the options within the Participants section (or by waving if they are using a camera so that the Chairman can see). Voting will take place in the same manner under instruction from the Chairman.

Meeting participants may wish to protect their personal environment by choosing a virtual background in the Zoom settings “Virtual Background”, or alternatively should consider what is visible behind them while on camera.

Public Participation

As with meetings in the Parish Hall, members of the public will be given the opportunity to speak during public participation, but will not be permitted, unless invited to so do by the Chairman, to speak at other times.

Anyone wanting to speak should raise their hand using “raise hand” in the options within the Participants section (or by waving if they are using a camera so that the Chairman can see). The member of the public should introduce themselves before speaking on their issue.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually.