

LAZONBY PARISH COUNCIL

Standing Orders Virtual Meetings Protocol

Introduction

1. On 4th April 2020, the government introduced The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 to allow local Councils to meet remotely. This protocol sets out how Lazonby Parish Council will continue to operate during the pandemic.
2. Parish Council is operating on the Zoom platform.
3. The Parish Clerk has set up a paid monthly subscription to the platform and informed all Councillors of how to access the platform. Councillors have been asked to contact the Parish Clerk if they have any technical issues in relation to access.

Planning and Preparation

1. The meeting will be advertised in the normal manner on the Parish Council website (and where possible, but not essentially, on the public notice boards) and an agenda will be issued within the normal time frames.
2. Minutes will be taken from the meetings and displayed on the website in the normal manner. Minutes will be circulated after the meeting and signed when the Council finally meets face to face.
3. Apologies need to be given in the normal manner.
4. The public are invited to observe the meeting. If they have a question to raise they have been asked to submit it in advance of the meeting. (please see the Public Participation section of this protocol)

Public participation or Other Participants

1. When the agenda is produced it will invite the public to contact the Parish Clerk by email if they wish to be invited to the meeting. They will be sent an agenda and on the day of the meeting will be sent a link to the meeting, with the meeting ID number and password.
2. They will be asked to check this link works in advance of the meeting. On arrival at the meeting, they will be held in a waiting room on the platform being used and let in against a list of names held by the Parish Clerk. This is to avoid the unknown potentially disruptive entries.
3. If the public wish to ask any specific questions they will need to have informed the Parish Clerk of this 48 hours before the start of the meeting, by phone or email.
4. The normal required standards of behaviour and discussion must be applied in the same manner of a face to face meeting. Please also be patient with those who are less experienced in this platform. Please also respect confidentiality and do not breach the code of conduct, and do not make enquiries about a private matter, health, home etc.
5. If a Councillor is deemed to have an interest in a matter and would normally leave a physical meeting, then they will be invited to leave and will be asked to wait in the waiting room so when ready they can be invited back into the meeting.
6. There might be technical issues during the meeting and the Parish Clerk might have to ask for clarification, for dialogue to be repeated in order to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

7. For those meetings which require some public or other participation, at the relevant item, if necessary the Meeting will be paused until such time as those other involved persons are able to participate.
8. If a technical matter prevents the relevant participant from attending then the Chair will make a decision as to whether they are able to put forward the person's contribution (e.g. a question).

Attendance

1. To attend any virtual, electronic or digital meeting, a Member must be able at that time:
 - a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,
 - b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and
 - c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting

Rules of a Virtual Meeting for all attendees to the meeting.

1. Council members and parishioners must be made aware of the following before each virtual meeting:
 - a) The meeting may be recorded for the purpose of minute taking and will be disposed of once it has been used in order to write the minutes and within 14 days of the meeting.
 - b) To have their microphones on mute unless they are allowed to speak.
 - c) To adhere to the Councils Code of Conduct, General Standing Orders and virtual standing orders (to be agreed as the first item of business at the first virtual meeting)
 - d) Only unmute when you have been invited in to speak.
 - e) Speak clearly and look into the camera.
 - f) Turn phones to silent.
 - g) Be aware of time lags and allow time for participants to respond.
 - h) Introduce themselves when raising a point.
 - i) Respond to the Chair when their name is called.
 - j) Be aware of your background (what others can see behind you when you are on screen i.e. valuables, photos, sounds)

The process to host meetings for Councillors

1. The Parish Clerk will host the meeting and set up the meeting perimeters. An email invitation will be sent to Councillors from the Parish Clerk. They need to click on the link and enter the meeting ID number and the password.
2. Before entering the meeting please ensure that Councillors are in a private place where there is little background interference/noise/people. It is difficult to hear on occasions and some might wish to use a headset with a microphone.
3. On entering the meeting, you will be placed in a waiting room.
4. The Parish Clerk allows access and you will join with their microphone muted. When the Parish Clerk has seen you and can verify you, you will be unmuted.
5. A check will be done to establish that you can be heard, but then all Councillors other than the Chair and the Clerk will be muted. If the Chair invites someone to speak they can be unmuted. Please do not interrupt others. If you wish to speak during the meeting, please raise your hand for the attention of the Clerk. When you speak

please state your name as you speak for the benefit of those who might not be able to see you.

6. The meeting will still be chaired in the normal manner. The Parish Clerk might have a greater input to guide the meeting to the next item, as some will not have access to an agenda for the duration of the meeting (if they do not have a printer).
7. If anyone struggles with hearing during the meeting, please use the chat box to type a message which will be seen by the Parish Clerk.
8. If people speak over others or if there is a time delay and matters are not heard the Chair or the Parish Clerk will ask for people to repeat, and to speak in turn.
9. All Councillors will be given the text number of the Parish Clerk and can send a message during the meeting if they are experiencing issues.

Protocol for the Meeting

1. Members should connect to the Meeting at least 15 minutes before the allotted commencement time and check that their connection is operational.
2. Members should ensure that their microphone is muted other than when they are entitled to speak.
3. The Council's Standing Orders will apply as subject to the following amendments:
4. Members are only entitled to speak at the invitation of the Chair, other than to:
 - a) move a Motion or Amendment without Notice
 - b) second a Motion
 - c) move a Motion which may be moved during a debate
 - d) move a closure Motion
 - e) point of order
 - f) personal explanation
5. In any debate, the Chair of the Meeting will ask each Member in attendance, in turn, whether they wish to say anything as part of the debate. If a Member wishes to speak then this is the point at which they will so speak.
6. Once each Member has either spoken or indicated that they do not wish to speak then the relevant matter will be put to the vote.

Remote Voting

1. The Chair will take the vote by:
 - a) either confirmation by Councillors present that there is an agreement; or
 - b) each Councillor, in turn will be asked how they wish to vote, and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining will be recorded.

Members with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a Matter

1. At the appropriate agenda item, In turn, each Councillor will be asked if they have a Declaration of Interest.
2. Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any particular matter must disconnect from the Meeting for that particular item. The Meeting will pause for up to ten minutes for the said Member to reconnect once the matter has been dealt with.

Confidential or Exempt Items or Issues

1. When confidential, or "exempt" issues are under consideration. The Chair and Members should ensure that there are no members of the public at remote locations able to hear or see the proceedings during such meetings. Any Remote Member should confirm, prior to participating in any confidential and/or exempt item of business

that they are in a secure private location and that no one else is able to hear the proceedings from the device being used by that Remote Member and that no recording is being made. Any member in remote attendance who failed to disclose that there were in fact persons present who were not so entitled will be in breach of their Code of Conduct responsibilities.

Connection Problems

1. If during the course of a Meeting, it becomes apparent that a Member is no longer in attendance, the Meeting will be paused for a period of up to ten minutes to re-establish their attendance.
2. After the ten minute period, if it has not been possible to re-establish the attendance of the particular Member:
 - a. If the Meeting remains quorate, the Meeting continues.
 - b. If the Meeting is inquorate, it will be adjourned until a suitable alternative time.
3. In circumstances when a Member rejoins part way through a re-commenced matter in a quorate Meeting and have missed part of the debate: councillors must take a view as to whether they are sufficiently informed to properly cast their vote.