

Mid Devon District Council Hybrid Meeting Protocol

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol sets out the arrangements for full Council and committee meetings in view of the ongoing need to manage the risk of Covid-19 infection.
- 1.2 Compliance with the protocol will ensure that the Council not only continues to hold its public meetings in a lawful and transparent manner, but also in a way which facilitates the safe participation of all concerned, including voting Members (who need to physically attend such meetings to be able to vote), non-voting Members, officers and the public.

2. Procedural Issues

- 2.1 The agenda (including reports) for such **meetings will be published on the Council's website in advance and include details of how to view live meetings remotely**, via Zoom. Members of the Public will be able to use a web link and standard internet browser to access a meeting remotely. Those attending meetings in person will be able to see and hear Zoom participants via the existing large TV/monitor screens in the meeting room. Those on Zoom will be able to hear Members in the room and see them as part of a whole room view.
- 2.2 **Meetings will be operated in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules taking account of the practicalities of remote participation.** For example:
 - Members attending remotely, who if physically present would be required to leave the meeting room because of an interest, will be moved to the waiting room for the duration of the particular agenda item.
 - Public questions will continue in line with the Council's current arrangements as far as is practicable. Members of the public who wish to speak must register **by 4pm on the day before the meeting**. They should email their full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk and are encouraged to circulate their question in advance. Unless they have registered, a member of the public may not be called to speak, except at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting.
 - On occasion when meetings are not open to the public as confidential or exempt matters are being considered, any members of the public attending the meeting via Zoom will be removed to a waiting room for the duration of the item.
 - Although traditionally individuals stand to speak at full Council meetings, standing makes it difficult for those on Zoom to hear what is being said by those physically present at the meeting. Standing is therefore discouraged.

3. Attendance in Person at Hybrid Meetings

- 3.1 Individuals are encouraged to attend meetings remotely. However, by law **Members who are entitled to vote and wish to vote at a meeting must be**

physically present. Current legislation also does not permit Members who attend remotely to count towards the meeting quorum.

- 3.2 Officers will only attend in person to secure the efficient and proper conduct of meetings. Such officers will always include at least the clerk and one other Committee Administrator who will be the Zoom-host and any other officers required by the Chair of the meeting (e.g. those presenting reports to the relevant meeting). Any other officers should use Zoom.
- 3.3 Members of the public are entitled to attend meetings in person. To help ensure everyone may be accommodated in the meeting in a safe manner and in particular, to ensure the meeting room does not become overcrowded, they must notify the Council **at least 3 working days before the meeting by email** at: Committee@middevon.gov.uk

4. Arrangements for Physical Attendance

- 4.1 In the interests of the health and safety of all persons physically attending meetings and out of mutual respect for others' well-being, everyone is requested to adhere to the following provisions. Attendees will also need to bear in mind that as the windows in the meeting rooms will usually be open to maximise ventilation, in cold weather they should dress accordingly for their own comfort.
- 4.2 **Do not attend a meeting if you** have any symptoms of Covid-19; are self-isolating (with or without a positive Covid-19 test); or are in a period of post-travel quarantine.
- 4.3 **When attending meetings, exercise caution by:**
- Using the hand sanitiser which is at the entrance to the building and in the meeting room.
 - Please follow directions for entering, moving around and exiting the building.
 - Follow the instructions of any officer present and/or the Chair to enable them to help manage the safety of the meeting as a whole.
 - If requested to do so, please leave your contact details.
 - Enter and leave the building promptly – do not gather inside after the meeting has finished, or during any break in the meeting.
 - Bring your own water/refreshments, as these will not be available at the meeting.
 - Unless otherwise advised, please refrain from moving the seats provided for you, as such will have been placed to ensure adequate spacing between attendees.
- 4.4 In addition, at meetings where there are likely to be a large number of attendees (e.g. at full Council meetings where 42 Members are required to attend in person to legally vote at the meeting) please wear a face covering unless in line with previous national requirements, you would have been exempt from doing so. When invited by the Chair to speak, you should temporarily remove your mask to ensure that you may be clearly heard when speaking into the microphone.

5. Meeting Etiquette

- 5.1 At the start of the meeting, the Chair will remind all persons attending via Zoom that all microphones must be muted, unless and until they are speaking. This prevents background noise which is intrusive and disruptive during the meeting. The Hosting Officer will enforce this and will be able to turn off participant microphones when they are not in use.
- 5.2 For any person attending via Zoom, the Council will not be using the Chat function. The Chair will call speakers in accordance with the usual rules (i.e. either at Public Question Time or, for Members and officers when they raise their Zoom hand to speak).
- 5.3 Attendees at the meeting are required to raise their hand to indicate a request to speak and (as with remote attendees) should only speak when invited to do so by the Chair. Persons invited to speak who are present in the meeting room must use the microphones at all times to ensure that they may be heard by remote attendees.
- 5.4 When referring to reports or making specific comments, individuals should refer to the report and page number whenever possible. This will help all attendees particularly those attending remotely to more easily follow the discussion.
- 5.5 When any confidential or public exempt items are considered at the meeting, any person attending via Zoom should turn off their smart speakers (such as Amazon Echo (Alexa), Google Home or smart music devices). These could inadvertently record phone or video conversations, which would not be appropriate during the consideration of confidential items.

6 Technical issues

- 6.1 **If any issues with the systems from the Council's side are identified**, the Chair should either declare a recess while the fault is addressed; or if the fault is minor (e.g. unable to show a presentation), move onto the next item of business in order to progress through the agenda. If it is not possible to address the fault, the meeting will be adjourned until such time as it can be reconvened.
 - 6.2 **If remote attendees experience internet problems which prevent access to the meeting**, it is possible to access Zoom via a landline telephone. To do so, before all meetings, note down or take a photograph of the front page of the agenda which has the necessary telephone numbers and follow the instructions. When you have joined the meeting using this system, press *6 to toggle between 'mute' and 'unmute' (you should always ensure you are muted until you are called upon to speak). If you wish to speak you can 'raise your hand' by pressing *9. Wait for the Chair to call you to speak. The Host will lower your hand after you have spoken. Make sure you mute yourself afterwards.
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