

**Example of Virtual Meeting summons plus
Protocol for virtual meetings to go alongside Standing Orders**

Courtesy of Rachael Kelly

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend The Parish Council Meeting ofParish Council to be held onin the below virtual meeting room to transact the business contained in the attached agenda.

Meeting Room Location and Joining Details:

Virtual Meeting Room:

Insert your link i.e. http// address

You can also dial in using your phone (charges may apply):

Telephone Dial in - United Kingdom:

Access Code:

Please ensure with any personal IT used, that your anti-virus software and computer has been updated fully as no liability will be accepted by the Council for any malicious acts/viruses etc. when using this third-party system.

Telephone charges are dependent on your telephone contract (i.e. if you have inclusive minutes within your contract)

Kind Regards

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allow local councils to hold remote meetings. The regulations give automatic authority to hold remote meetings and amend standing orders as required.

These regulations remain in force until 7 May 2021 or earlier if repealed and require a number of temporary changes to Standing Orders.

General

This Protocol and Procedures note should be read in conjunction with the Council's standing orders.

The Regulations made under s78 of Coronavirus Act 2020 apply and where there is a conflict between these and any other adopted standing orders or legislation, these Remote Meetings Procedures take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.

The meeting may be recorded for the purpose of minute taking and will be disposed of within 24 hours.

1) Annual Meeting

- a) The requirement to hold an Annual Meeting of the Council is to be disregarded and prior to 7 May 2021 may only take place:
 - i) where called by the Chair or
 - ii) following a resolution calling for an annual meeting being passed at an ordinary or extra ordinary meeting of the Council.

2) Access to Information

- a) Where a document is required to be 'open to inspection' this shall include published on the website of the council.
- b) Where a document is required to be published and made available at the council's offices, this shall include published on the website of the council.
- c) Where there is a requirement to publish information including public notices, agendas, minutes, background papers and written reports, this shall include published on the website of the council.

3) Remote Access to Meetings

- a) The definition of meeting within the Council's standing orders is amended so that:
 - i) 'place' includes where a meeting is held, or to be held in more than one place including electronic, digital, or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers
 - ii) 'open to the public' includes access to the meeting by remote means including video conferencing and interactive streaming
 - iii) where a meeting is accessible to the public through remote means, the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.
- b) If the Council becomes aware that its technology has failed, and the meeting is no longer accessible to the public, the meeting shall be adjourned.
- c) If public access cannot be restored within a reasonable period, the remaining business shall be deferred to a future meeting.

4) Councillors in Remote Attendance

- a) A councillor in remote attendance is present and counted for the purposes of the

quorum when they can:

- i) hear and where practicable see other members of the council
 - ii) hear and where practicable see members of the public wishing to participate during the public session of the meeting or as invited by the Chairman
- b) A councillor in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance at 4 a) are not met.
- c) Subject to 4 b) the Chairman may if appropriate
- i) adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established
 - ii) count the number of councillors in attendance for the purpose of the quorum

5) Remote attendance by members of the public

- a) A member of the public is in remote attendance when they can:
- i) hear and where practicable see and so be heard and where practicable be seen by members of the council at the meeting
 - ii) hear and where practicable see and so be heard and where practicable be seen by other members of the public attending the meeting including those wishing to speak during the public session or as invited by the Chairman
- b) A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance at 5 a) are not met.
- c) Subject to 5 b) the Chairman may if appropriate
- i) adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established
 - ii) vary the order of the agenda or complete the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.
- d) The Council will only allow written questions received from Registered Electors of the parish in advance of the meeting (received by any set deadline which shall be published with the agenda).

6) Remote Voting

Unless a recorded vote is demanded, the Chair will take the vote by:

- a) confirmation of the meeting that there is agreement or
- b) a roll call and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining will be recorded.

7) Code of Conduct – councillors excluded from the meeting

Where a councillor is required to leave the room as a requirement of the Council's code of conduct, the means of remote attendance and access will be severed whilst any discussion or vote takes place.

8) Exclusion of the press and public

Where the council has resolved to exclude the press and public from any part of the meeting, due to the confidentiality of the business to be discussed then:

- a) The means of remote attendance and access to the meeting by members of the press and public will be severed
- b) Each councillor present shall declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (hearing or seeing), and/or recording the meeting.

Briefing – Virtual Meetings

The legal framework for local council meetings requires that all council meetings are open to the public and that unless confidential, that the public can watch the debate and see the decisions made for their area.

To manage the impact of social distancing, councils were unable to meet physically i.e. all members and the public in one physical place. Wherever possible councils moved to adopt a scheme of delegation to the Clerk to allow decisions to be taken during the emergency. The purpose of the delegation was to protect the council whilst the law did not allow decisions to be taken outside of properly convened physical meetings.

The legislation has now been changed and local councils are now expected to meet regularly using technology rather than relying on the delegation in lieu of holding meetings during the Covid19 pandemic.

The HCID Policy and delegated powers are still active, but the following points should be considered:

- a) Many councillors have found themselves in the protected categories and even if there is a swift return to physical meetings are unlikely to be able attend. Remote meetings will allow these councillors to continue play an active part in the work of the council.
- b) The law still allows 2 councillors to demand a council meeting and this request would have to be fulfilled now that a remote meeting is possible.
- c) The legislation permitting remote attendance by members and members of the public remains in place until May 2021. The council will be required to offer remote access to meetings even when it decides to return to physical meetings as its first choice.
- d) The council can choose to reduce the number of meetings whilst there is little or no business to transact and rely on a scheme of delegation between meetings.
- e) If the council decides to rely solely on a scheme of delegation instead of meeting it may be challenged or criticised as there is now a statutory mechanism for holding remote meetings.

Attendance at meetings and the six month rule

Attending remote meetings, getting to grips with the technology or debate on the phone will be challenging. The council will have to start meeting in this new format at some point as there are still some statutory functions which have to be done 'in public'. The government does not believe that councils should avoid meeting to accommodate a reluctance to use the new technology and the following points may be helpful:

- a) Every councillor is part of the decision-making process which takes place at meetings. The council should consider how to 'ease' into remote meetings and support members and clerks who are struggling with the concept.
- b) A member of the council is deemed to be present at any meeting of the council where they can be heard and ideally seen i.e. phone or video link with/without a camera.
- c) Councillors have signed a declaration of office to attend meetings of the council as and when required. Councillors unwilling to attend meetings in the new format will be counted as absent from the meeting and will lose their seat after six calendar months unless the council grants an extension to their apologies for a significant reason. We are being advised that choosing not to attend because of the remote format is not a suitable reason.

Guidance for Meetings Being Prepared

Your normal council meeting follows a long established order of debate, where councillors and members of the public are very familiar with the format. Whilst the outline remains the same, virtual meetings held over the internet create some different issues and it will take time for everyone to cope with the new style.

It is important to try out the technology and learn how to work with virtual participation, the varying internet connection and the mixed media of webcams and phones. Just because everyone can access a meeting does not mean that they will be able to participate in the same way as before and like many things practice will help build confidence.

Much of the council's normal activity will have changed or stopped completely this gives you the chance to have shorter more effective meetings. A clear purpose for the meeting with a sound agenda will help build confidence in the new technology.

At the beginning of the meeting

Whilst the format of the agenda may be familiar, a virtual meeting requires the Chairman to carry out some extra checks at the start of the meeting. These include:

- a) to confirm that all those present are able to hear the proceedings.
- b) To take a roll call of members present at the meeting
- c) To confirm the quorum for the meeting based on those members attending remotely.

The Chairman can then outline how he will run the meeting including the protocols for wishing to speak, voting, and viewing documents before starting to work through the agenda.

During the meeting

All of the normal rules of debate apply including the number of times a member can speak, the length of any contribution, declarations of interest, the rules for voting and controlling disruptive behaviour.

It is important that the Chairman and Clerk have established how they will communicate during the meeting as it is no longer possible to communicate quietly!

Most IT has a method for adding comments during discussions, however, this chat facility will be disabled for the duration of the meeting.

The software will have a mute button which can be used to limit public comment outside of the public session. Participants should be reminded to mute themselves to avoid background noise from their home environments but will need to be reminded to unmute in order to speak.

IT issues

Unlike a physical meeting, a remote meeting requires the public to be able to see and/or hear the whole of the meeting. In the event of an apparent failure of the video or telephone conferencing connection, the meeting may need to be temporarily stopped. The Chair can then establish:

- a) If the failure prevents the meeting from being open to the public
- b) if the meeting is still quorate or the failure reduces the number of members present

and eligible to vote

- c) the meeting should be adjourned for up to 5 minutes to determine whether the connection can be quickly re-established or a suitable alternative can be used.

In the event of a connection failure the remote member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure. If the connection is re-established the remote member(s) will be deemed to have returned to the meeting at the point of re-connection.

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

(To be displayed within the invitation, waiting room (if available) and agenda)

It is important that members and parishioners are made aware of the following at the beginning of each virtual meeting:

- a) The meeting may be recorded for the purpose of minute taking and will be disposed of within 24 hours.
- b) To have their microphones on mute.
- 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)

Notes to Supplementary Standing Orders on Remote Meetings

As part of the management of the Covid19 pandemic, the government has published regulations to permit remote council meetings. Councillors, the public and press no longer have to be present in a single physical space in order to meet and conduct council business. The regulations remain in place until May 7th, 2021 and this advice builds on the paper prepared by Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) and the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO).

The Coronavirus restrictions mean that there are no physical meetings at present. As restrictions are lifted it is possible that the council may wish to return to physical meetings. These regulations require the council to offer remote access to meetings until May 7th, 2021 or earlier if the government repeals the legislation.

The temporary legislation now requires some changes to Standing Orders. We have prepared a supplement which can be adopted to extend your council's standing orders to accommodate remote meetings for the life of the legislation, without the need for redrafting at a later date. This guidance may seem complicated at times, but we have tried to cover the requirements for remote and mixed remote/physical meetings until 7 May 2021 so that you do not need to make other changes.

Introduction

- 1) All meetings of the council must be open and accessible to the public with adequate provision for access to the papers for the meeting. The new legislation simply expands on how the council may meet virtually and varies the requirement for an annual meeting.
- 2) Public access to meetings by remote means is different from attendance at a council meeting in order to speak during the public session.
 - a) An IT failure which prevents public access to the meeting renders the whole of the meeting incapable of proceeding.
 - b) An IT failure which prevents a member of the public from addressing the council during public participation will not invalidate the meeting.

1) Annual Meetings

- a) The requirement to hold an annual meeting in May 2020 has been removed, giving local councils the option to continue without an annual council meeting in 2020/21 or to set a date for a meeting later in the year.
- b) If you choose to continue without a meeting, the appointments made in May 2019 will continue until the annual meeting in May 2021.
- c) The regulations do not cover Annual Parish/electors meetings which may be called by the council or by electors. The NALC/SLCC advice is that social distancing principles remain in place and that you should not call the annual electors meeting at this time.
- d) Draft minutes of remote meetings should be made available on the council's website within a reasonable time, especially as the number of meetings may vary. The delegated decisions register should also be kept up to date on the website in between meetings for transparency.

2) How should agendas for meetings and papers be provided?

- a) The regulations do not amend any of the legal requirements for the calling of meetings including the days of notice required for holding a meeting of the council

or its committees and sub committees.

- b) The regulations state that the council should use its website for the publication of documents and the calling notice for meetings which must give the date and time and the virtual location of the meeting.
- c) The public notice and summons must now include details of how to join the meeting and links to the associated papers for the meeting.
- d) The summons can be issued to all members of the council by email, and should include:
 - i) links to the agenda and associated documents for the meeting or
 - ii) email versions of documents necessary for the meeting
 - iii) details of how to join the meeting and how to phone into the meeting if necessary.

3)How should remote access be provided?

- a) Councillors, members of the press and public are encouraged to use facilities provided by the council to attend and participate in remote meetings.
- b) The Council should choose a suitable platform and encourage members to spend some time familiarising themselves with the software before the first remote meeting.
- c) It will not always be possible for members and the public to use video conferencing. Alternative methods of attending include audio link or telephone call.
- d) The Council must ensure that the software allows members of the press and public to have access to the meeting and be able to participate.
- e) Non members of committees have the same rights as members of the public and must also be able to access meetings via real time technology if they are attending to observe and participate at the discretion of the chairman.
- f) If the Council's technology fails the Council must allow time for a connection to be re-established. If it is not possible to reconnect the public access, the Chairman will have to consider what other options to take including carrying forward items to the next agenda or referring matters to a committee.

4)Remote access by members of the public

- a) Wherever possible a breakdown in the IT should not disadvantage the public from having remote access to the meeting.
- b) The Council must consider how to manage the public session. Unlike physical meetings the council could vary standing orders to ask members of the public to either:
 - i)submit their questions in advance so that person can be sent the joining information to access the meeting and speak OR
 - ii)Only take written questions submitted in advance

5)Declarations of Interest and the Code of Conduct

Members must act in accordance with the Code of Conduct, making the necessary declarations of interest and 'leaving the meeting' whenever the matter is being discussed. There must be a clear minute of the member leaving and re-joining the meeting.

Depending on the software being used, this may require the councillor to leave the call and then be re-invited once the item has been completed.

It is important that the public see that the member has 'left' and then re-joined.

6) Exclusion of the press and public from meetings

- a) Having passed the resolution to exclude the press and public, it is important to confirm that there are no members of the public present on the IT system.
- b) Members of the council should remember that the 'closed session' applies to confidentiality at home at remote meetings and it is their responsibility to make sure that confidential discussion cannot be overheard by other household members.

Suggested resolution for the adoption of the supplementary standing orders:

To resolve to adopt supplementary Standing Orders to meet the statutory requirements for the holding of remote meetings, and this lasts until 7 May 2021 or the repeal of legislation whichever is the earlier.

AGENDA

The meeting may be recorded for the purpose of minute taking and will be disposed of within 24 hours.

1.	Virtual Meetings To resolve to adopt supplementary Standing Orders to meet the statutory requirements for the holding of remote meetings, and this lasts until 07.05.2021 or the repeal of legislation whichever is earlier								
2.	Apologies To receive and accept apologies and note the reasons for absence.								
3.	Minutes of last Above Derwent Parish Council meeting To authorise the Chairman to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 19 th February 2020 (<i>previously circulated</i>)								
4.	Declarations of Interest/requests for dispensation a. Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their register of interests b. To declare any personal interests in items on the agenda and their nature c. To declare any prejudicial interests in items on the agenda and their nature (Councillors with prejudicial interests must leave the meeting for the relevant items) d. To make any requests for dispensation								
5.	Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960) To consider whether there are any agenda items which require consideration of which press and public exclusion.								
6.	Public Participation To receive previously notified public questions - Members of the public who wish to submit written representation are requested to contact the Parish Clerk not later than noon on the Monday preceding the meeting. Your request should outline the question you will be raising. This allows time for the Clerk to make any necessary enquiries prior to the meeting. This is at the Chairman's discretion and no decisions can be made on items brought to the attention of ADPC under this item.								
7.	National Trust Representatives To receive correspondence, reports and information on matters relevant to the Parish								
8.	National Park Representatives To receive correspondence and information on matters relevant to the Parish.								
9.	Ward Representatives To receive reports on issues relevant to the Parish 9.1 - Cumbria County Councillor – Allan Bowness 9.2 - Allerdale Borough Councillor – Carmel Bell 9.3 - LDNPA – written report from Cllr. Geoff Davies, Parish member North distinctive area.								
10.	Consultations/Projects requiring action or decision 10.1 -								
11.	Action Reports/Updates from Councillors 11.1 - Policies - to receive an update from the Policy Review Group, and consider the following policies for adoption: <table border="1" data-bbox="300 1736 1380 1870"> <thead> <tr> <th>Policy</th> <th>Date of Adoption / Latest Review</th> <th>Date for Review</th> <th>Category</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Urgent Planning Application</td> <td>Mar-19</td> <td>Mar-20</td> <td>E</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 11.2 - ADFG - to receive a written report if received 11.3 - Highways – To discuss any highways issues in the parish and to review the highways schedule if necessary 11.4 - Lengthsman report – Circulated to parish councillors prior to the Meeting	Policy	Date of Adoption / Latest Review	Date for Review	Category	Urgent Planning Application	Mar-19	Mar-20	E
Policy	Date of Adoption / Latest Review	Date for Review	Category						
Urgent Planning Application	Mar-19	Mar-20	E						

12.	<p>Applications for Development</p> <p>12.1 - To receive for consideration the following application/s for development:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="252 255 1323 360"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ref no.</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Location</th> <th>Comment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Additionally, any urgent applications notified to us after the publication of this agenda will be considered in accordance with our <i>How we deal with urgent planning applications policy document</i></p> <p>12.2 - To receive notification of determinations made by the Lake District National Park Authority</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="252 584 1326 685"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ref no.</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Location</th> <th>Decision</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ref no.	Description	Location	Comment									Ref no.	Description	Location	Decision								
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13.	<p>Clerk's Report</p> <p>To receive an oral summary of work undertaken by the clerk since the last meeting, those issues outstanding, and to receive correspondence, with an opportunity for councillors raise questions.</p>																								
14.	<p>Police</p> <p>To discuss any relevant matters of local concern.</p>																								
15.	<p>Financial Matters</p> <p>15.1 - To approve payments detailed below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="252 949 1345 1084"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Payee</th> <th>Cheque No.</th> <th>Budget Head</th> <th>Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>15.2 - To note the balances at the bank, as at 1 March 2020 Business Money Manager: £30,608.14 Community Account: £8,887.07</p> <p>15.3 - To authorise the chairman & vice chairman (or another parish councillor) to sign the cashbook reconciled to the bank statement</p>	Date	Payee	Cheque No.	Budget Head	Amount																			
Date	Payee	Cheque No.	Budget Head	Amount																					
16.	<p>Date of next meeting – the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 22 April 2020, at The Church Hall, Braithwaite, at 7pm.</p>																								