

# **CHALE PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Protocol for virtual meetings**

### **Background**

This protocol will be observed for all meetings under the direction of Chale Parish Council to which the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 apply. By default, meetings are open to the public and press unless there is an overriding reason for confidentiality (set out in other legislation). The protocol applies to all meeting “participants” (voting Councillors) and “viewers” (members of the press and public). The protocol will be reviewed after each meeting and alterations may be made as a result. Please be mindful that apps can access personal information.

### **Behaviours**

The Council will not accept or tolerate any inappropriate behaviours, comments, postings, or contributions. Standing Orders including Standing Order 6.4 apply to remotely accessed meetings. However, given the immediate and potentially highly offensive nature of online abuse any suspected infringement will result in the host muting the feed from the alleged offender and returning them to the waiting room. At the direction of the meeting Chair the host will close the connection to the party concerned if possible. If it is not possible to exclude any contribution or contributor then the meeting may be terminated on the direction of the Chair, and resumed immediately afterwards excluding the party concerned.

### **1. Before the Meeting**

- 1.1. The Parish Clerk will make arrangements for the virtual meeting room and will publish the agenda together with a request for any members of the public to contact the clerk for access information.
- 1.2. At least two hours before the start time for the meeting, all participants should declare to the Parish Clerk any interest in any matter to be discussed. If as a result of any interest declared, any participant would normally be required to leave the meeting room then the item will be moved to the end of the meeting (if practicable) and the participant with the interest will leave the meeting.

### **2. Start of meeting**

- 2.1. The Parish Clerk will open the meeting room ten minutes before the advertised start time for the meeting.
- 2.2. All Councillors and “participants” will enter the virtual meeting room. The host (Parish Clerk) will admit participants to the meeting.
- 2.3. All participants will be asked to remain silent during the meeting as they enter the meeting room.
- 2.4. All participants will be asked to test their connection to ensure that they can hear and be heard by others.
- 2.5. The Chair will ask all participants to confirm that they are in as quiet a location as possible and that others will not interrupt or disrupt proceedings.
- 2.6. Unless being used for remote access to the meeting, participants’ mobile phones should be switched off or switched to silent.

### **3. During the Meeting**

3.1. The host will admit viewers to the meeting.

3.2. The Chair will welcome everyone to the meeting and will provide information for viewers.

3.3. The meeting protocol is the same as it would be in a traditional meeting in the Council's normal meeting rooms; in summary:

- all contributions must go through the Chair,
- items will be introduced,
- participants may discuss the matter or ask questions which may be answered,
- any members of the public who wish to put forward views (and who are invited to do so by the Chair) may do so,
- the discussion may be summed up by the Chair, and motions moved,
- the participants will be invited to vote by clear show of hands or individual verbal communication via the chair.

3.4. If any participant leaves the meeting for whatever reason, this will be recorded in the minutes. If the participant re-joins the meeting, this will also be noted in the minutes.

### **4. Speaking and voting**

4.1. Any participant who wishes to speak must raise their hand and clearly indicate to the Chair who will direct the order of speaking. (Separate arrangements will be made for any participant who joins the meeting by audio only.)

4.2. Voting at remote meetings will be carried by a roll call of Councillors' names and asking them to state their vote, or by another method of voting, should a platform allow it, as determined by the Chair of the meeting. The Parish Clerk will read back the votes of each participant for clarification. Votes will only be listed in the minutes if a recorded vote is properly requisitioned.

Reviewed and Approved by Chale Parish Council on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023

*DAVE STEWART*

Chairman