

Canvey Island Town Council

Virtual Meeting Policy

Introduction

Canvey Island Town Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate and has developed this policy to assist the Town Mayor, councillors and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist people to engage in debate and decision making. The policy is to be delivered within 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020' and that are currently enacted for meetings on and up to 7 May 2021.

Publishing the agenda and providing documents

Councillors are to be summonsed as per regulation with the agenda and documents being placed on the Council's website. No agendas will be published on physical noticeboards. Any person unable to access the Council's website must contact the Town Clerk and request an electronic copy of the agenda and documents to be forwarded as appropriate. In cases that documents originate from a third party electronic links will be provided where available.

Virtual Meeting 'platform'

Canvey Island Town Council will utilise Zoom to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops, and fixed room systems.

In preparation for the meeting the Town Clerk will publish via the summons:

- The zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

Standing Orders

Standing Orders will remain unchanged and be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a place. An addendum has been added to the existing standing order which covers virtual meetings for the period they are permitted.

Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements

a. Discussions

This section applies if members are experiencing good connectivity. In the case of poor connectivity see item c.

During the meeting all persons other than the Town Mayor and Town Clerk will be muted.

During the public participation period members of the public will be required to 'enable video' in order for them to be visible to the Town Mayor and will raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. Their microphone will then be unmuted and they can address the meeting. Following the conclusion of their address the microphone will be muted.

During the meeting members and officers will raise their hand to indicate to the Town Mayor that they wish to speak on an agenda item and will be unmuted. If a member is not visible they will be asked whether they wish to provide comment.

All members attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise to negate interference with the meeting.

b. Voting

All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands. Any members who are not using the video option will be asked to state their vote verbally. The Town Mayor will read back the votes to the Town Clerk to ensure it is correct.

c. Poor connectivity

In the case of poor connectivity the Town Mayor in consultation with the Town Clerk will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene.

In the case of video not being available for some or all of members attending the Town Mayor can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for councillor views on individual agenda items.

d. Attendance

If a member is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be noted in the minutes. If 'drop outs' result in the meeting becoming inquorate members will endeavour to re-join for a period of 15 minutes. After 15 minutes if the meeting is still inquorate the Town Mayor will suspend the meeting and reconvene at a later time and date subject to the statutory days of notice. Members will be telephoned to advise of the suspension.

e. Telephone attendance

Persons wishing to attend by telephone are advised to contact the Town Clerk in advance in order that processes can be put in place to enable appropriate engagement.

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders apply with regard to Conduct at Meetings and all attendees are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people experience with regard to the operation of technology.

Behaviour that is contrary to the intended outcomes of the meeting will be dealt with at the discretion of the Town Mayor. For a member of the public or press this may result in them being dismissed from the Zoom meeting.

Declaration of Interests

A councillor that has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the waiting room. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made the councillor will be returned to the meeting

Public Participation

The Town Clerk will read any pre-submitted addresses from the press and public.

Confidential Matters

Confidential matters will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting that is available to members only. On conclusion of the non-confidential matters on an agenda the meeting will be suspended for members to re-join using the confidential zoom meeting link that will have been provided to members only.

Recording

Zoom meetings will be recorded for minute taking purposes only and will be deleted once draft minutes have been completed.

Information

The chat view box on the Zoom meeting will be disabled however it will provide additional information to attendees depending of the specific meeting.

For further information see The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>