



## **DITCHLING PARISH COUNCIL**

Ditchling Village Hall 18 Lewes Road Ditchling East Sussex BN6 8TT  
Tel: 01273 844733 Email: parishoffice@ditchling-pc.gov.uk Website: www.ditchlingpc.org.uk  
Parish Clerk: Sarah Mamoany Deputy Clerk: Derek Blackhall

### **Ditchling Parish Council Virtual Meeting Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

Ditchling Parish Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate and has developed this policy to assist Chairmen, 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 meeting on and up to 7 May 2021.

#### **2. Agenda**

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. Wherever possible, an agenda will be displayed on the Notice Boards situation outside Ditchling Village and in the High Street. Agendas will only be published on physical noticeboards if safe to do so. Any person unable to access the Council's website must contact the Council 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.

#### **3. Virtual Meeting 'platform'**

Ditchling Parish Council will utilise Zoom to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices and desktops. In preparation for the meeting the Clerk to the Council will publish via the summons:

- The zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode

#### **4. Standing Orders**

Standing Orders will be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a place.

#### **5. Virtual Meeting Etiquette and Code of Conduct**

Normal Code of Conduct applies with regard to Conduct at virtual meetings and all attendees are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people experience with regard to the operation of technology.

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

For this reason, the Chairman will be the host and at their discretion will abort individual members, or if necessary, the whole meeting.

## **6. Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements**

### **a) Discussions**

This section applies if members are experiencing good connectivity.

During the meeting all persons other than members will be muted. During the public participation period members of the public will be required to 'enable video' if available in order for them to be visible to the Chairman 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 Chairman that they wish to speak on an agenda item. To raise a hand using the desktop software, click on 'Participants' at bottom of screen then click on the small icon that looks like a hand. Chairmen will indicate when it is the member's turn to speak. Chairmen using smartphones may only have the current speaker in view, so will not be able to see others physically waving or using the 'reactions' button to indicate they want to speak, please make sure to use the 'raise hand' icon.

Smartphone users, scroll to bottom left of screen and tap on the icon 'raise hand'.

Those members attending by telephone can use \*9 to indicate they wish to speak.

All members attending the meeting will monitor their own background noise and mute their own microphones, except when speaking, if necessary, to negate interference with the meeting.

### **b) Voting**

All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands or a verbal 'yes/no' spoken in turn for those members not using video.

### **c) Poor connectivity**

In the case of poor connectivity, the Chairman 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 Chairman 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 minuted. 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 Chairman 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 Clerk in advance in order that processes can be put in place to enable appropriate engagement. Telephone attendees can mute/unmute by keying \*6 and can "raise their hand" by keying \*9.

### **7. 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

### **8. Public Participation**

The published agenda will include a link to the meeting. The Clerk will read any pre-submitted addresses from the press and public. At the Chairman's discretion, the press and public will be invited to address the meeting.

### **9. Confidential Matters**

Confidential matters will be dealt with at the end of the meeting and members of public and press will be removed from the meeting and anyone joining the meeting after the meeting goes into confidential session will enter the virtual waiting room and only members of the Council will be admitted to the meeting.

### **10. Recording**

Zoom meetings will be recorded by the Clerk for minute-taking purposes and will be deleted once the draft minutes are available.

### **11. Information**

The chat view box on the Zoom meeting will be disabled.

For further information see The Local Authorities & Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority & Police & Crime Panel Meetings) (England & Wales) Regulations 2020.