

Cyngor Cymuned Llandrillo Community Council

Remote attendance at meetings

A protocol for Councillors, Clerks and Members of the Public

[based on OVW Guide for Councillors and Clerks]

September 2020

Introduction.

This protocol is designed to support Community/Town Councils to manage meetings on a remote basis in accordance with temporary emergency regulations¹ designed to relax some of the rules relating to the conduct of Council business, so that important decisions can still be made whilst the powers to issue directions relating to events, gatherings and premises are in force². This means that the Council can now hold official meetings virtually, with Members participating via video conferencing.

Video conferencing

The Council will be using Zoom videoconferencing software therefore meeting participants are required to:-

1. Ensure that they are familiar with the software.
2. Check that you can see the Chair of the meeting.
3. Make sure that you are in the centre of the screen by positioning your device or camera appropriately and look into the camera. Aim for a head and shoulders shot similar to a passport photo.
4. Keep your device still and on a flat surface.
5. Consider your personal appearance, you will be on show throughout the meeting.
6. Consider the background, aim for a plain wall backdrop as your bookshelves or notice board may be distracting for other meeting participants. Check if there is confidential or inappropriate information on the wall behind you. Is there enough light for people to see you? Is the sun or artificial lighting 'bleaching' out your face?
7. Ask family members to stay out of shot as people wandering about making coffee etc can be distracting.
8. Ensure that members use any 'chat' facilities for meeting business only.
9. Remember to conduct yourself as you would in any public meeting. Some applications make whatever is available on your computer screen visible to those participating in the meeting, this may also be seen by the public if access to the public has been provided for.

Meeting Styles and Preparation

During the current special circumstances, the style and tone of video conferencing meetings will be very different from conventional physical meetings. Meetings will be properly constituted, by way of formal notice, and will focus on issues which are critical to the business of the Council and require decisions. It is anticipated that the majority of meetings will be Full Council meetings. This temporary protocol does not preclude other meetings involving Council Members taking place where no decision is required.

¹ The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020

² Coronavirus Act 2020 Sc.52

These changes will require Members to prepare thoroughly and focus on the outcomes required. There may not be time for extensive debate and Members will need to understand information and reports thoroughly prior to the meeting.

As equipment is being used for video conferencing Members may wish to note items on the agenda that they wish to refer to without having the need to view specific documents online.

In respect of planning consultations Members should view the applications prior to the meeting on Denbighshire County Council's website using the following link :-

<https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/planning-and-building-regulations/search-and-comment-on-applications.aspx>

And then following the instructions on screen.

Rules of Debate

Chairs with the Clerk should agree and advise members of the different 'rules of debate' before each meeting. These rules of debate are specific to video conferencing meetings and supplement the Council's Standing Orders which remain in force at all times.

The Chair will be in control of the meeting and will at the beginning the meeting by checking that all Councillors, Staff and Members of the public can hear and see the proceedings.

The legislation specifies that 'meetings of a local authority held before the 1st May 2021 may be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to speak to and be heard by each other (whether or not the equipment or facility also enables those persons to see each other)'. therefore, the lack, or loss, of a video feed will not prevent the meeting from proceeding.

Member unable to connect due to technological or internet failures will be able to tender their apologies, and this would be accepted as a legitimate reasons for non-attendance.

The Chair will make it clear how people will participate and how you will be invited to contribute. The Chair will be supported by the Clerk who will handle meeting logistics.

To facilitate the meeting once you have been welcomed to the meeting, by the Clerk, she will immediately mute your microphone and wait for the Chair to establish communication with all participants, prior to commencement of the meeting.

Once the meeting is formally opened by the Chair everybody must:-

- a) Ensure that their microphone is muted when not contributing.
- b) Respect the Chair and wait in turn to be called.
- c) Show mutual respect of all participants by indicating that you wish to speak by raising a piece of paper, pen, or other object to clearly differentiate from simple hand gestures.
- d) Avoid repetition where possible.
- e) Council Members must ensure that they declare interests and do not take part in the discussion or voting on any relevant matter.

If there is no unanimous agreement and there is a need for a vote, on a specific resolution, then this would be achieved by the Chair calling each name alphabetically with a response of 'for' or against a from each Member which can be noted by the Clerk to ensure accurate representation and recording of decisions.

Public participation

Members of public are allowed access to meetings and will have requested attendance, prior to the meeting, from the Clerk

Members of public will only be able to speak during the agenda item **PUBLIC TIME**. At all other times there would be no interaction with the public as the meetings are Council business meetings and not public meetings.

Members of the public are requested to:-

- a) Respect the Chair and wait in turn to be called.
- b) Mute your microphone following their contribution.

Photographing, recording, broadcasting, or transmitting

Photographing, recording, broadcasting, or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior written consent.

The Council is not liable for the actions of any person making a recording at or of a Council meeting which identifies a member of the public or for any publication of that recording.

The Council may itself photograph, film or record meetings and can retain, use, or dispose of such material in accordance with its document retention and disposals policy. Any such copies will be destroyed once the minutes of the recorded meeting have been approved as correct and a true record.

The printed, and signed, minutes of a Council meeting remain the statutory and legally binding formal record of Council decisions.