



Meetings During CoVid-19 Policy and Guidelines

Adopted by Marden Parish Council: April 2020
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Review date: April 2022

Office Opening Times
Mondays, Tuesdays & Fridays 10am - 12 noon
www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk
Email: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk
Marden Parish Council Virtual Meeting Policy

MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Meetings During CoVid-19 Policy and Guidelines

PLEASE READ THIS ALONGSIDE MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Following The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 coming into force on 4th April 2020 Parish Councils have been given the authority to hold Council meetings virtually (Regulation 5).

Marden Parish Council has therefore agreed that for the foreseeable future they will hold remote Council meetings, under the title of Emergency Committee (see motion carried at the Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting held on 24th March 2020) or Full Council meetings, by using the Zoom app. Zoom subscription has been paid for until June 2021.

Meetings

All meetings will be a Full Council meeting and will cover all Committee issues other than Finance (ie Planning and Amenities).

Meetings will be held as normal on a Tuesday evening at 7.30pm by Zoom.

Agendas will be published on the Marden Parish Council website www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk and emailed to Parish Councillors, Borough Councillors, County Councillor, MP and other interested bodies. It will also be uploaded to Facebook. A list of proposed meeting dates will be placed on parish notice boards.

An email will be sent to Parish Councillors the week prior to the meeting with details of date, time and link to Zoom. This link will also be placed on the bottom of the agenda. Any apologies, and reasons, should still be sent to the Clerk prior to the meeting commences.

Any member of the public who wishes to attend the meeting can use the link at the bottom of the agenda.

Protocol During the Meeting

Marden Parish Council

When logging on Cllrs should check that their microphone and speaker are working.

Cllrs taking part in the meeting will make themselves known to the Clerk and Chairman at the start. Both microphone and video should be on when admitted to the meeting from the Waiting Room. Cllrs ID (ie Cllr) must be visible at all times.

Cllrs should only use the microphone and not the video when asked by the Clerk.

The Chairman will chair the meeting as normal. Cllrs should be muted and if they wish to speak should use the hand icon or via the chat facility. The Chairman will then say the Cllr's name before they should speak. Once the Cllr has finished speaking they should indicate that they have nothing else to add. **No other Cllr must speak whilst another is addressing the meeting.**

Cllrs will be asked, alphabetically, if they have any comment to make on each agenda item. Once all Cllrs have had the chance to speak on an item the Chairman will summarise for a further show of hands (hands icon) to confirm in agreement.

The Clerk will take notes of how the voting went along with minuting the meeting.

The Clerk can record the meeting at any time should Cllrs so wish.

Members of the Public

This should be read in conjunction with Marden Parish Council's Public Participation Policy

The member of the public is encouraged to contact the Clerk prior to the meeting to indicate that they wish to speak on a particular item on the agenda.

They will be held in the waiting room and will be accepted into the meeting when the meeting is ready to start. Members of the public will be asked to ensure their full name is clearly visible to the meeting, that after being accepted into the meeting that their video is turned off and they must be muted until such time they are permitted to speak – at this time the Chairman will indicate that they have 3 minutes to address the meeting. Following this time, they should be muted for the remainder of the meeting (unless further questions from Councillors are needing to be answered).

As per Marden Parish Council's Public Participation Policy although there is no automatic right for members of the public to speak at Council meetings, the chairman will consider requests to speak on any agenda item but is not obliged to grant all or any of them. *Please note that when the Chairman asks for requests to speak this means both verbally and via the chat facility.*

Members of the public may also indicate that they are willing to answer questions from councillors on any agenda item about which they have particular knowledge.

Any final requests to speak must be raised under the agenda item '*Identification of Items involving Public Speaking*' near the start of business. Later requests or comments via the chat facility will not be considered. If unable to use a microphone the chat option is made available and the Clerk will read out statements.

Where more than one person makes a request to speak, the chairman may ask those wishing to make a similar point to appoint a spokesman.

The number of people invited to speak on any agenda item will be limited to a maximum of three.

In most cases, priority will be given to requests to speak in the order that they are notified to the Parish Clerk, but this may be varied by the chairman of the meeting where it is necessary to ensure that differing views are aired.

Persons invited to speak are required to give their name and address and state their interest in the matter under discussion.

Speeches are limited to a maximum of three minutes each.

The chairman of the meeting may curtail any speech (for example, if inappropriate language is used).

A period is set aside for public discussion of non-agenda items at the beginning of the Parish Council meetings.

End of Meeting

The Chairman will declare the meeting closed and state the time.

The Clerk will then end the meeting

The draft minutes will be uploaded to the MPC website by the Monday of the following week.

At the next meeting the minutes will be agreed. A watermark will be added “Agreed on But not signed”. A statement to be added to the top of the agreed minutes “Agreed at Council meeting on to be signed when Council able to meet in person”.

The agreed minutes will be uploaded to the MPC website following the relevant meeting at which they were agreed.

FACE TO FACE MEETINGS

Marden Parish Council can hold face-to-face meetings but need to meet National Association of Local Councils (NALC) criteria before commencing (see Appendix A).

Marden Memorial Hall Main Hall is not equipped with wi-fi so virtual / hybrid meetings of the Council could not be held whilst social distancing is required.

APPENDIX A

CHECKLIST FOR HOLDING AN IN-PERSON COUNCIL MEETING

Following the government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4 July, both NALC and SLCC strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face-to-face contact.

If the council wishes to consider returning to face-to-face meetings then there are a range of issues that will need to be addressed before this can take place. This checklist will help the council ensure this decision is made in accordance with relevant regulations and requirements.

Further guidance related to COVID-19 can be found on the NALC and SLCC websites.

- 1 **There is no way for the council to conduct business except through a face-to-face meeting.**
 The council staff and councillors are unable to conduct business without a face-to-face meeting.
Note: The government rules still state that we should all work from home if we can. The council is unable to make use of telephone or online technology to conduct quorate council meetings.
Note: Local councils have the powers to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021. Parish meetings do not have such powers to meet remotely. The council has a reasonable business need, or legal need to meet in person at this time.
Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 state that a public authority can only hold a gathering of over 30 people if certain conditions are met
- 2 **Action has been taken to seek a number of options for an appropriate venue for the council meeting.**
 These venues comply with normal council meeting requirements.
Note: NALC members can access Legal Topic Note 5 – Parish and community council meetings.
 The venues allow the public to observe council meetings with social distancing without placing restrictions on the number attending.
 The venues conform with the government guidance for multi-purpose community facilities and for council buildings.
 If the venue is not owned/managed by the council the owners have been asked for their risk assessment and what actions they are taking to reduce risk.
- 3 **There is a potential venue the council can use in compliance with the above requirements.**
- 4 **The council understands and is acting in compliance with ‘safer workplaces’ guidance.**
- 5 **The council has checked if there are councillors or staff that will be unable to attend face-to-face meetings due to health, disability or other reasons.**
 The council has considered how it will make reasonable adjustments to allow individuals with disabilities or other needs to take part in the meeting.
 The council has considered a hybrid approach to meetings.
- 6 **A risk assessment has been conducted.**
 Consideration has been taken towards what the council can do to reduce risk to councillors, staff and public including:

- (i) Providing hand sanitiser to those entering the meeting room and making sure hand sanitiser is readily available in the room itself.
- (ii) Staggering arrival times for staff, councillors and members of the public.
- (iii) Ensuring seating is placed at least 2-metre apart.
- (iv) Asking people to wear face masks.
- (v) Holding paperless meetings.
If papers are provided, people should be discouraged from sharing with others and asked to take the papers with them at the end of the meeting to minimise how many people handle the papers.
- (vi) Arranging seating so people are not facing each other directly.
- (vii) Choosing a venue with good air flow, including opening windows and doors where possible

Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 require that the person responsible for organising the gathering has carried out a risk assessment and the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission taking into account the risk assessment.

7 The council has decided, based on the risk assessment and with risk management actions that it is safe and appropriate to meet.

8 All-risk mitigating actions identified by the risk assessment have taken place.

This checklist has been conducted to the council's satisfaction and it has been agreed that the council will hold a face-to-face (or hybrid) meeting.

The council will re-evaluate this decision following the first council meeting held, and where necessary the risk assessment and risk management activities will be updated. Following this, the council will review this checklist [quarterly/after each council meeting/at times to be agreed by the council/delete as appropriate].

This document was produced by NALC and SLCC and all due care has been taken that it is accurate and reflects current government guidance and legislation at the time of writing (July 2020). This document is designed as an aid to council decision-making, it does not constitute legal advice and neither organisation is responsible for the actions of councils who use this document.

The council is responsible for the health and safety of staff, councillors and others attending council meetings. The council must take care to check it is working to the most up-to-date government guidance and legislation.

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