

SNETTISHAM PARISH COUNCIL – POLICIES

VIRTUAL MEETINGS POLICY

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I CONTEXT

During the COVID 2019 pandemic, the Government allowed Parish Councils to meet virtually. Council used Zoom during this time, and, while it had limitations, it was of great use in many ways.

Council considers that such meetings should be included in a policy to govern how it uses them.

II GENERAL

Council should continue a subscription to Zoom. Councillors should endeavour to ensure they have access to equipment capable of allowing such use, and Council will consider providing this resource to individuals if required.

At all times, Working Groups can meet using this facility, should their members so decide.

Support Groups do not have the status of Committees in Council's Standing Orders. They are currently therefore in law Working Groups, to which Council has given the public admission. They can therefore continue to operate virtually, should Councillors decide to do so, without any changes being required.

As of 7/5/21, the legal permission for Full Council to meet virtually officially ends, thought there is legal review of this in progress (16/4/21).

III EMERGENCY PROVISIONS

Until there is clarity on the situation referred to above, and the safety of Councillors, Members of Staff and the Public cannot be guaranteed:

1. Councillors will continue to meet virtually at the times advertised for Full Council meetings;
2. These meetings of Councillors shall be publicised and open (including a public question section) in the same way as Full Council meetings would be;
3. Councillors will consider agenda items in the normal way;
4. They will make recommendations instead of decisions;

5. Any such recommendations which are legal will be actioned by the Clerk as if they were decisions of Council;
6. To this end the Clerk shall be delegated with all powers of Council which can be legally delegated;
7. This provision should end automatically after a maximum of six months, or when a majority of Councillors agree in writing, whichever is the earlier. Such an earlier conclusion should demonstrate that Council has taken due regard of its responsibility to its Members, and the Public, and its role as an employer.

Council believes that this is a practical solution to a difficult situation. It keeps deliberations transparent and public, and provides a means for Council to continue to operate during this transitional time.

Should this Policy be adopted, this Emergency Provision shall override any other such provisions in Standing Orders.

Date of original adoption – 5/5/21

Date this version adopted – 5/5/21

Date(s) of Review – 4/5/22

Document checked as accessible – 10/5/21