

## **Protocol for Remote Meetings**

### **Glynneath Town Council**

#### **1.0. Introduction**

- 1.1. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020, the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 were approved by Welsh Government. This allows Town and Community Councils to meet remotely. These regulations will apply to meetings held before 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

Part 2 enables participation at meetings of a local authority held before 1 May 2021 on the basis of full or partial remote attendance so long as persons who are not in the same place are able to speak to, and be heard by, other participants.

#### **2.0. Technology**

- 2.1. For the purposes of holding remote meetings, Glynneath Town Council will use Zoom.
- 2.2. Guidance on how to use the video-conferencing platform will be circulated to all members and officers and will be publicly available on the Council's website.
- 2.3. Members or officers will advise the Town Clerk of any technical issues relating to access to these meetings.

#### **3.0. Preparation for Meetings**

- 3.1. The meeting will be advertised on the Council's website and all members and officers due to attend will be issued with a notice and agenda by email. This will be within the usual timeframe for meeting notices (in line with Standing Orders)
- 3.2. All non-confidential meeting papers will be available on the Council's website.
- 3.3. Minutes will be taken in the usual way and draft minutes will be displayed on the Town Council website. Draft minutes will be circulated after the meeting and signed at a future face-to-face meeting, once restrictions have been lifted.
- 3.4. Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, apologies will be submitted and received in the usual way.
- 3.5. The meetings will be open to the public and ways of accessing the meeting will be explained on the agenda (or on the meeting notice).
- 3.6. The same standards of behaviour are applied to remote meetings as to physical meetings. All members are bound by the Council's Code of Conduct.

Members, officers and members of the public are asked to be patient with those who are less experienced in such meetings.

- 3.7. Members and officers in attendance at the meeting are reminded to check the background of their video range in order to ensure confidentiality, data protection and Code of Conduct requirements are met.

- 3.8. It is possible that technical issues may arise. It may be necessary for the host to request clarification or ask for dialogue to be repeated to make sure everyone can be heard and that they have the correct information for the minutes.
- 3.9. Those in attendance are asked to physically raise their hands when they wish to speak. Anyone dialing in by telephone will be advised of a word to use to enable them to “raise a hand” vocally.
- 3.10. Where a councillor has an interest in a matter and would normally leave a physical meeting, they will exit the meeting. They will either wait in the virtual “waiting room” or leave completely and be advised by text message by the Town Clerk when they can return to the meeting.
- 3.11. It may be necessary for members to prepare themselves for the meeting in a different way than usual. Where members do not have access to a printer, it may be necessary to familiarise themselves with the agenda and any reports beforehand.

#### **4.0. The Meeting**

- 4.1. The Town Clerk of the Council will set up and technically host the meeting with assistance from the Assistant Town Clerk. An email invitation, with an explanation of how to access the meeting, will be sent to all members,
- 4.2. Councillors are asked to ensure they are in a place with as little background noise as possible. Once checks have been carried out to ensure that everyone in attendance can be heard, all those in attendance are asked to “mute” their microphones until such a time as they are ready to speak. This eliminates background noise and feedback as well as ensures people are not talking over one another as there can sometimes be a time delay. Where this is not done, the host of the meeting will mute attendees.
- 4.3. Whilst the Town Clerk is hosting the meeting, it will be chaired in the usual manner. There is a possibility that there will be more input from the Town Clerk than is usual given that, where members do not have access to a printer, it is possible that they will not be able to use the computer video function and look at the agenda and/or supporting papers at the same time.
- 4.4. If a vote is required, Members will be asked to express their vote verbally one at a time, in response to their name being called by the Chairman. Any members attending by telephone will be asked to express their vote vocally (this is not to be confused with a recorded vote, which must be requested through the usual process).
- 4.5. If you have difficulty hearing or being heard throughout the meeting, you are asked to advise the Town Clerk via the text “chat” function. Please be aware that this can be seen by everyone in attendance.

#### **5.0. Public Participation**

- 5.1. The agenda will invite the public to attend and will include information of how to access meetings.
- 5.2. The usual public question time session will take place. Members of the public are reminded that the Council cannot make any decisions on matters that do not appear on the agenda. Public Question Time will be restricted to items on

the agenda only. If members of the public have questions about matters not on the agenda, they are requested to contact the Council outside of the meeting.

- 5.3. The meeting host may remove anyone from the meeting who is being intentionally disruptive, using offensive language or incessantly interrupting the meeting proceedings.
- 5.4. Advance notice of the intended question must be given to the Town Clerk using the Council email address or telephone number on the Town Council website. This must be done no later than two hours before the commencement of the meeting.

#### **6.0. Relation to other policies and procedures**

- 6.1. The Town Clerk will ensure that Data Protection requirements are followed when organising remote meetings
- 6.2. Members of the Council and members of the public are asked to ensure that they do not breach the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and general confidentiality when they contribute to the meeting.
- 6.3. Where relevant, the Council's Privacy Notices will be amended to incorporate remote meetings.
- 6.4. Where relevant, the Council's Risk Assessment will be amended to incorporate remote meetings.