

Remote Meetings Protocol

1. **Background** – The pandemic of 2020-21 highlighted the difficulties faced by councils, in undertaking and managing normal council meetings in the face of a lock-down. The solution was to turn to technology, by holding remote meetings via video collaboration applications such as Zoom or Skype. However, holding meetings in this fashion comes with its own set of challenges. The purpose of this protocol is to set out basic rules to be followed, should remote meetings be required in the future - It does not reference specific applications, since it is unknown when such a situation will recur, nor what applications will be available at that time.
2. **Collaboration Tool – Key attributes** – Assuming remote meetings are mandated, then if central government direction on tool selection is provided, this should be followed. If council discretion is permitted regarding tool selection, consider the following attributes when selecting a suitable collaboration tool:
 - It should not require installation of software on to a participant access device (i.e. it should be browser, or similar technology, based)
 - Must allow for invitations with joining instructions to be sent to active participants
 - Must allow for external ‘guests’ (i.e. the public) to be able to join the meetings
 - Must allow for individuals to be muted and unmuted as required
 - Must have management features to allow the meeting organiser to manage participant access and use of functions
 - Video is preferred to sound only, but sound only should be available, if circumstances dictate
 - The ability to record the meeting video for playback at a later time
3. **Key Meeting Protocols:**
 - **Meeting Notification** – When it is determined that a meeting will be held remotely, the normal Notice of Council Meeting will clearly state that the meeting is to be held remotely and will include instructions aimed at the public to let them know how they can join the meeting.
 - **Mute & Video** - When in the meeting please keep yourself on mute until you want to speak (or are asked to speak). If you want to speak raise your hand and un-mute so the chairman can see. The chair and clerk will be unmuted to control the flow of the meeting and the agenda items.
 - **Voting and resolutions** – When Council is discussing a specific motion for resolution the chair will clearly ask each councillor in turn for their views and vote. The chair or another councillor may propose an amendment to the motion and if this is seconded, the motion will be discussed and/or voted on in the same way. Councillors must express or show their support or objection clearly. Standing Orders will be followed as in face to face meetings.

Hopesay Parish Council

- **Declarations** - If a councillor declares an interest in an agenda item the chair will ensure that they leave the live meeting session, and procedures are in place to invite them back, once the relevant agenda item is closed.
- **Public participation** - Members of the public who wish to join the meeting will be allowed to do so, in the same way that they can in face to face meetings. At the start of the meeting the chair will explain the process for members of the public joining the meeting as per Council's standing orders (i.e., option to address the meeting about an item on the agenda for up to 3 minutes during the Public Participation session).