

## **HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Virtual Committee Meeting Protocol and Etiquette**

This Protocol will apply to all virtual Council meetings held by Hertfordshire County Council.

1. The Council's adopted standing orders will continue to apply to all Council meetings. Agendas will be published as usual; Members will be notified by email and be able to view agenda papers online.
2. It is recommended that Members and officers participating in virtual meetings present themselves as they normally would for a business meeting.
3. Any additional devices with an in-built microphone should be switched off prior to joining the meeting.
4. Please join the meeting via the link sent to you by Democratic Services at least 10 minutes before the meeting time stated on the agenda summons to test your camera and microphone. Please adjust your background where possible by utilising a non-descript background to retain your own confidentiality and to ensure backgrounds are not distracting to others. [If you are struggling with connection turn off your camera feed as this will help your broad band speed].
5. At the start of the meeting please mute your microphone and switch off your camera, remembering to turn them back on when you are invited to speak by the Chairman. This will limit background noise and enable those who are speaking to be seen and heard more clearly. Officers present at the meeting will follow the same protocol.
6. The Chairman will open the meeting by confirming the Members and Officers present at the meeting clarifying those entitled to vote where appropriate.
7. The Chairman will go through the agenda in the usual way. Hard copy minutes will be signed by the Chairman once restrictions are lifted.
8. Please use the chat function to indicate to the Chairman that you wish to speak. The Chairman will note these requests and call Members to speak in turn. The chat facility should not be used for private conversations as everyone will be able to see it.

9. Please only speak when invited to do so by the Chairman. In order to manage the meeting, it is vitally important that the proper process be followed and that only one person speaks at any one time.
10. When the Chairman is satisfied that there has been sufficient debate on an item and that everyone has had an opportunity to speak who wants to, the Chairman will progress to making a decision. Members entitled to vote at the meeting should indicate their vote ('for', 'against' or 'abstain') using the chat function. If necessary, the Chairman will take an individual roll call for each Member of the Committee to confirm their vote. The results will be declared by the Chairman and recorded within the minutes. In the event of equality of votes, the Chairman has the casting vote in line with the normal rules.
11. Where exempt (Part II) items of business need to be discussed, the broadcasting of the meeting will be paused, and the meeting will continue with only Councillor and officer participants. Once consideration of exempt business has concluded the broadcasting will re-commence to finalise business.
12. The Chairman's direction and ruling at the meeting shall be final and not open to discussion.
13. In the event of any connection failures, the Democratic Services Officer clerking the meeting (Chief Legal Officer for Council) will advise the Chairman whether the meeting is still quorate. If the meeting is still quorate it will continue. If there is no quorum the Chairman will specify the period for which the meeting is to be adjourned. It is expected that adjournments should be no longer than that needed to enable the connection to be re-established. The Chairman will advise Members accordingly.
14. All meetings will be recorded and minutes will be published on the Council's website in the usual way.