

## **BENENDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020  
Effective 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 until further notice

The Regulations enable local councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May next year. They also remove the requirement to hold an annual meeting, although the Parish Council may do so if it so chooses.

Where an appointment would otherwise be made or is required to be made at the annual meeting, the appointment continues until the next annual meeting of the Parish Council or until such time as it may determine. This applies to the election of the chairman. The current chairman will remain in place until an annual meeting is held (possibly next year) unless the Parish Council decides to elect a replacement earlier.

The Regulations enable local councils to make standing orders to specify :

- i. how voting will be carried out
- ii. how members and the public can access documents and
- iii. how remote access of the public by electronic means will take place.

Public notice of the time and place of the meeting is deemed to be given if published on the Parish Council's website.

Written records and any background papers will be available for inspection by publishing them on the Parish Council website.

A member in remote attendance attends the meeting at any time if the member is able at that time:

- a. to see and be seen by the other members in attendance,
- b. to see and be seen by any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and
- c. to be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

## Standing Orders

### Benenden Parish Council Remote Meeting Protocol and Procedure

There will not be any further formal scheduled meetings of the Parish Council until further notice. All meetings will be held remotely following the National Association of Local Councils' guidelines.

Emails will also be kept as a formal written record of communication and decision making.

#### REMOTE MEETINGS

The Parish Council will use ZOOM as its remote meeting platform.

#### Council Discussions

- i. The Clerk will make arrangements in advance of any meeting by sending out agendas and papers in the normal way, together with a 'session ID' for the remote meeting platform.
- ii. Meetings will follow the agenda.
- iii. The Chair of the Parish Council will chair the meeting.
- iv. Those in attendance will mute themselves when not speaking.
- v. Those in attendance will raise their hand when they wish to speak or the Chair will invite Councillors to speak one by one.
- vi. The Chair may ask everyone to state their name before they start speaking so that it is always clear who is speaking.
- vii. Proposals and voting should be clear and unambiguous.
- viii. When voting Councillors will be asked to raise their hands or the Chair will invite Councillors to vote one by one.

#### Behaviours and Conduct

The required standards of behaviour and discussion are the same whether in remote or face-to-face meetings. These are difficult times and people may be worried about their health or family members, they may be frustrated being isolated at home, and there may be challenges with using new technology particularly if there are technical difficulties. Everyone in the meeting will need to be respectful and compassionate towards one another, emotions may be higher than usual but that only makes it more important that everyone approaches the meeting with respect and in the spirit of the council's code of conduct.

#### Declaring Interests

If a Councillor needs to 'leave' the meeting if they have an interest, a time to return to the meeting will be agreed by the Chair.

#### Public Participation

Parish Council meetings must still be advertised and the public have a right to observe.

#### Minutes

Minute taking will be done as usual with the clerk seeking clarity at any point, should it be needed. The minutes should be agreed at the next meeting and retrospectively signed at the next face-to-face meeting.