

Virtual Meeting Policy

The following policy shall be adopted in relation to the conduct of all virtual meetings of Burstow Parish Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees:

- 1 Where the Virtual Policy conflicts with the existing Standing Orders for the Council, this policy shall apply, in all other cases (including the rules of debate) the existing Standing Orders for physical meetings shall apply.
- 2 A meeting is a meeting of the Council as allowed under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. Attendance is summonsed and apologies must be given if a Councillor is unable to attend.
- 3 The meeting platform will be an established provider such as Zoom.
- 4 Councillors attending virtual meetings should dress accordingly. They should be seated in front of an appropriate background, and try to ensure that they will not be interrupted during the course of the meeting.
- 5 Agenda and notices will be published on the Council website a minimum of five days prior to the meeting.
- 6 The notice or agenda must include instructions as to how the public can request the Clerk to provide the link to attend the meeting. Public participants will be asked to submit questions in advance – see 18.
- 7 Any public wishing to attend the meeting must ensure that they register under their true name; pseudonyms are not allowed, and, where discovered, the person will be denied access or ejected from the meeting
- 8 All public participants will be muted and only able to participate during the allotted time on the agenda.

- 9 A member of the public wishing to ask a question during public participation may do so by indicating (via the raise hand button). Once Open Forum is over, the public will be muted and not able to interact; they will still be able to hear the Council. Public questions will follow the normal Standing Orders format.
- 10 *The Clerk, or a designated Councillor, agreed in advance, will be the host for the gathering and closing of the meeting but will transfer the host facility to the Chairman to manage the meeting.*
- 11 At the commencement of every remote meeting the Chairman will take a roll call of attendees and apologies for absence. When a Members name is called out, they are required to unmute their microphone, respond 'Present' and then mute their microphone again. This is firstly to ensure at the outset of the meeting that it is quorate, and secondly to provide transparency to the public as to which Councillors are in attendance.
- 12 Councillors must mute unless speaking. They should indicate that they wish to speak via the raise hand button, and wait to be recognised by the Chair.
- 13 The Chairman should announce each Member when inviting them to speak, to aid transparency and assist those learning.
- 14 Councillors who wish to declare an interest in any item of business which requires them to leave the room will be transferred into the virtual waiting room for the duration of that item; where they will not see or hear the proceedings and be unable to vote.
- 15 Any person can leave the meeting while in session. However, any Councillor leaving the meeting should be recorded as such in the Minutes for accuracy of decision making. Should connectivity be lost, that Councillor will be deemed to have left the meeting. Suspending the meeting to allow for reconnection will be at the discretion of the Chairman.
- 16 When a vote is required, the Chairman will read out the motion to be voted on, giving clear instruction as to what the proposal is and how the 'yes' and 'no' buttons will record their vote. The Clerk will count the votes for and against and also record any abstentions. If a

Councillor does not respond, the Clerk will advise that no vote has been recorded and the Councillor will respond verbally stating they are abstaining. The vote will then be recorded in the Minutes.

- 17 Disorderly conduct, including by members of the public attending the meeting, will be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders, Section 2, and they may be 'excluded from the meeting' by transferring them to the virtual waiting room.
- 18 Should the number of participants expected exceed the permitted participants limit, the Council will not permit members of the public to join the meeting. This will be made clear on the agenda. The Council will answer questions submitted (see 6) as per the usual Standing Orders protocol; the Chairman may direct that a written response be given.
- 19 Officers are required to use existing devices and connectivity. If this is not available and their attendance is necessary, the Council will supply a laptop/device.