



Stanway

Parish Council

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Videoconference Protocols – July 2020

These protocols are designed to supplement, not replace the meeting protocols laid out in the Parish Council's Standing Orders. These can be found at <https://www.stanwaypc.org.uk/uploads/standing-orders-2019-20.pdf>

A code of behaviour at videoconference meetings has emerged over the last few months which appears to help them work better by ensuring that everyone participating has the best opportunity to hear, if not see what is going on. This is all the more important for the assembly of a democratic body.

The Parish Council currently uses the Zoom teleconferencing application for its Full Council meetings and either Zoom or Microsoft Teams for its committee meetings. Each comes with slightly different features, such as the hand icon in MS Teams to indicate that a participant wants to speak.

- Members of the Parish Council will automatically receive an invitation to join every Full Council meeting and as a member of their respective committees. If not a committee member but wish to participate, they can request to be sent the invitation.
- Similarly, the County and Borough Councillors of Stanway will be sent the agenda for a Full Council meeting to which they have been invited to provide a report and will be sent the link upon request. For members of the public and the press, once they have identified themselves, an invitation to join the meeting will also be sent to them.
- **On no account should invitations be forwarded to anyone else.** Everyone (other than a member of the Parish Council) who wishes to attend a virtual meeting should request an invitation from the Clerk of the meeting, providing their name, address and contact telephone number. This information is used solely for the purposes of identification and will be deleted from the Council's records within a few days of the meeting. Unidentified attendees will be blocked from entering the meeting.
- On 'arrival' at the meeting, all participants are requested to mute themselves. It has been shown time and again that microphones will pick up 'noises off' quite easily, such as a radio, other people in the household, a dog barking and even (famously) a toilet flushing. All these can quite readily drown out the meeting and be quite disruptive, especially to those that have problems either with their hearing, their technology or both.
- **Please note that, apart from segments allocated to Public Participation and County/Borough Councillors' reports, local government legislation allows only Parish Council members to speak during the main body of the meeting.** They should indicate their wish to do so by a raised hand (virtual or real) and speak only at the invitation of the Chair of the meeting.
- A similar protocol should take place during the 'open' sections of the meeting (as indicated above), with a raise of the hand indicating to the Chair, for example, that the member of the public or press would like to ask a question. It should be noted that a response may be limited, with the offer of a fuller reply to be sent after the meeting. However, unless the question relates to an item on the agenda, no decision may be made at the meeting, but an item could be put on the agenda for a future meeting.
- A little patience may be required, as it is quite evident that managing a meeting with a dozen or more participants on a small screen can be quite difficult. The Clerk, who acts as the meeting host, will try to assist the Chair in this task. **In all cases, once the speaker has finished, they are requested to mute themselves again for better conduct of the meeting.**

The guiding principle, as ever, is that the Chair's word is final.