

Hatley Parish Council

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Virtual Parish Council Meetings

In response to the Covid-19 virus, new legislation has been introduced by Parliament enabling Town and Parish Councils to lawfully conduct virtual meetings. Under current social distancing guidance we are not permitted to hold public meetings in the Village Hall. **The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020** came into force on 4th April 2020. Members will be able to attend meetings remotely and there is provision for public and press access. The Regulations apply to meetings held before 7th May 2021.

The new Regulations remove existing requirements for local authorities to hold annual meetings and allow meetings to be held remotely using video or telephone conferencing or by other remote means. The temporary changes to legislation were essential because Parish Councils must adhere to statutory duties which include holding annual meetings in the period March to May each year, holding meetings in person, and requiring the attendance of all members at a place together.

The new Regulations permit local authorities to 'meet' on a remote basis. This provides an opportunity for local authorities to help to deal with the pandemic within their communities, and to ensure that essential council business continues whilst upholding democratic principles and protecting the health and safety of members, officers and the public, in line with official public health guidance.

Hatley Parish Council will be holding a remote Extraordinary Meeting via Zoom technology on 3rd September 2020. The virtual meeting room will open online at 7.20 pm, with Meeting commencing at 7.30 pm. The meeting will include a public forum, as usual, to allow members of the public to address the Councillors. **Alternatively, members of the public can contact the Parish Clerk up to 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 2nd September with any questions** they would like to be raised on their behalf at the meeting via parishclerk@hatley.info.

Zoom technology has already been used by a large number of Parish Councils to hold meetings, and the UK Cabinet has also used Zoom technology to hold a virtual Cabinet meeting. The set-up is quite simple and therefore suitable for those who are less tech-confident.

To join the meeting

To be able to join a virtual meeting via Zoom you will need go to www.zoom.us on your device (laptop/phone/PC etc.) and select 'join a meeting'. You will need to enter the meeting I.D. which is detailed on the meeting [agenda](#) along with the password to access the meeting.

To use the video technology you will need internet access and your device will need a microphone and webcam.

Alternatively, you can dial into the meeting using your telephone to listen and speak but will have no visual coverage. The dial-in details are also noted on the meeting [agenda](#) and, again, you will also need the password.

Virtual meeting protocol

During the meeting

1. The Chair of the Council will Chair the meeting, or the Vice Chair in the absence of the Chair.
2. A member of the Council or Clerk will host the meeting on Zoom.
3. Members of the public will enter a “waiting room” on Zoom and wait for the designated host to approve their attendance. It would be helpful if members of the public could “name their video” so that the Chair and Clerk can refer to them correctly by names during the meeting.
4. Members of the public or Council who have dialled-in to access the meeting will be asked to make their presence and names known at the start of the meeting.
5. All attendees will be muted on entry to the meeting.
6. Members of the public will be able to make representation during the public forum.
7. Members of the public will be asked to “put their hand up” using the icon on Zoom if they wish to speak during the public forum. Those who have dialled-in will also then be invited to speak in turn.
8. The host will “unmute” members of the public who wish to speak, at the instruction of the Chair.
9. At the conclusion of the public forum the host will “mute” all members of the public.
10. The **required standards of behaviour and discussion are the same whether in remote or face-to-face meetings**. Members of the public who use or display inappropriate or offensive language and/or behaviour will be removed from the meeting to the waiting room. This includes any inappropriate backdrops on display on the video.
11. The Council will discuss, via email, prior to the meeting any items which are considered sufficiently confidential as to warrant exclusion of members of the press and public under the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and will advise of the outcome of any discussions at the meeting.

After the meeting

1. The Clerk will produce the draft minutes of the meeting and share them on the Hatley website as soon as possible, as usual.
2. Members of the Council and the Clerk will review how the meeting went and may make some changes to the process if necessary, ahead of the next Parish Council meeting.
3. Feedback is welcome from meeting participants by contacting the [Parish Clerk](#).