

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Remote Teams Meeting on Tuesday, 12th May, 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor J.Watkins (Chairman)
County Councillor D. Evans (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: M.Groucutt, F. Taylor, J.Treharne,
S. Woodhouse, A.Davies, L.Brown, L.Dymock, A. Easson, R. Harris,
M.Lane, P.Pavia, R.Roden, B. Strong, T.Thomas and A. Watts

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair opened the remote meeting and welcomed all Members in attendance.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Remote Meetings - Guidance and Protocol

The Local Democracy Manager welcomed all members to join the meeting at which he would advise on the new process of accessing meetings remotely, via Microsoft Teams.

The following points were noted:

- Expected behaviours and the principles of normal meetings still apply
- The background can be changed for privacy/professionalism – a standard MCC background can be uploaded
- Preparation is important - issues around screen space, accessing agenda, notes etc
- Joining a meeting – for a committee there will always be an emailed calendar appointment which includes the link to join the meeting. This will be copied into the calendar in Teams as well so two places to join the meeting.
- There are lots of different ways to use Teams to hold meetings but in order to live stream and maintain security, we will use the live event version. This means, only members of the committee, relevant officers and where notified for questions or participation,

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members of the public will be given a link to join. Everyone else will have a link to just watch a video of the meeting as its happening. Very similar to current physical set up (everyone in the room, everyone at home).

- Toolbar run through – mic/camera, conversation/chat, background/ switch off incoming cameras.
- Log in to a meeting 15 minutes prior to it starting. Test your camera, your microphone, and your audio. You can mute and switch off camera and leave connection going if you wanted to until the meeting starts but get connected first as priority.
- If connecting with a non-council device – tablet/phone. Check a day or so ahead of the meeting that you can join. Most will be fine, but exempt and confidential meetings can prevent access through non council devices.
- Turn off camera and microphone when in a meeting. Only turn camera on when you are near to being invited to speak. Remember to unmute your microphone when you do start speaking. Democratic Services can mute you but can't switch you back on.
- When you join a meeting, make sure you open the chat functionality or show conversation. All voting and interaction with the chair will take place in here. No other conversations are to take place in the chat other than to interact with the chair. If you want your own conversations, use a separate chat, old skype system (still working for now), emails, whats app whatever you like. But keep this clear otherwise you will miss your opportunity to speak.
- Voting will be done in the chat through an app. Simply click your preference followed by submit vote and the system automatically calculates.
- The Chair will lead meeting from the outset and be given a draft agenda to know who will introduce each item plus potential speakers/officers. The Chair can see all participants in the meeting so will introduce on their behalf. Chair will also note apologies received in advance of the meeting and ask for any apologies to be recorded in the chat for inclusion in the minutes.
- Chair will introduce the agenda item and ask relevant officer to speak. Whilst they are doing so, if members wish to ask a question write in the chat so the chair is aware of who wishes to speak. The chair will bring you in at the relevant point where you switch on your camera and microphone. Once finished, switch them both back off and the chair will co-ordinate from there to get response from relevant officer. Repeat until all people spoken and move to the vote.
- Members who have an interest to declare on an agenda item will notify the chair in the chat facility that they wish to declare and interest and be invited into the chair to give details of the interest.
- If your interest is Pecuniary or prejudicial, you will be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the item. You can do this by clicking leave at the top of the screen or clicking the red square with the white telephone in the toolbar in Teams. Leaving a meeting does not prevent you re-joining at it another time.
- The Chair will need to be content that the member(s) have left the meeting and is not taking part in the debate. The chair can check the participants in the meeting by clicking the 'show participants' button in the toolbar next to the chat icon. This can be used to check they have left the meeting as well as having re-joined the meeting on conclusion of the item.

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- Democratic Services will contact the members that have left the meeting to inform them when they can re-join. Members can re-join the meeting in the same way they did initially via the link to the meeting in outlook or Teams.
- Democratic Services will email the declaration of interest form to members for completion and return following the meeting.
- All participants need to be mindful of adhering to the rules on confidential agenda items and ensure that no other individuals can see or hear the conversation that is taken place. It is your responsibility to ensure that it remains confidential and you need to be aware of your surroundings to ensure that no other person can overhear the discussion.
- Members are still bound by the code of conduct for remote meetings in the same way as physical meetings and expected behaviours and principals remain in place.

Concerns were highlighted around Planning Committee and we were advised that more guidance on Planning will be coming forward. The Local Democracy Manager is to meet with Head of Planning to discuss the complexities. It is expected that Planning meetings will commence early July 2020.

It was noted that Points of Order would be checked with the Monitoring Officer.

It was understood that with these current processes there could be more flexibility around Pre-Meetings.

In terms of legislation there has been a removal of the requirement to hold an AGM in May. This could possibly be held in July/September. The Chairs will carry on their duties until the AGM.

A number of seminars are being scheduled and dates will be circulated shortly.

There is no set date to start Select Meetings, possibly after Council on 4th June. A meeting of Licensing Committee will be held before end of June.

There is no movement on Area Committees as yet.

The Committee expressed thanks to the Democratic Services Team.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified