

## Virtual Meeting Policy

Wrockwardine Parish Council ('the Council') recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually when a physical meeting is not appropriate. This policy is to assist the Chairman, Councillors and members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and, to assist residents and members of the public to engage in debate and decision making.

The policy is delivered within 'The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020' and that are currently enacted and are active up to 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021.

### 1. Virtual Meeting Platform

The Council will utilise Zoom to provide video communications. Zoom enables video and audio conferencing for persons using a wide range of technology including laptops, mobile devices, desktops and fixed room systems.

### 2. Agenda and Document Publication

Councillors will continue to receive their summons, as per regulation, with the agenda and associated documents by email or, where requested, by postal services. The agenda will also be placed on the Council's website at [www.wrockwardine.org.uk](http://www.wrockwardine.org.uk)

The day prior to the meeting, the Clerk will forward to councillors, via email, the following:

- The Zoom meeting link
- Meeting ID
- Meeting passcode
- Telephone numbers for audio connection

The agenda will also be published on the five noticeboards in the Parish where this remains possible given current UK Government advice. Any person who is unable to access the Council's website can request a copy of the agenda by email or post by contacting the Clerk. In cases where documents originate from a third-party, electronic links will be provided where available.

### 3. Standing Orders

Standing Orders will continue to be used to guide the meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a physical place.

## 4. Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements

- a. **Discussions** (*this section applies if participants are experiencing good connectivity. In the case of poor connectivity see 4 c.*)

During the meeting all participants, other than Councillors and officers, will be muted. During the public participation period members of the public will be required to “enable video” in order for them to be visible to the Chairman and will raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. Their microphone will then be unmuted and they will address the meeting. Following the conclusion of their address their microphone will be muted (*see also Public Guidance at the end of this policy*).

During the meeting Councillors and officers will raise their hand to indicate to the Chairman that they wish to speak on an agenda item.

All Councillors and officers attending the meeting should monitor their own background noise and mute their microphones, except when speaking, if necessary, to negate interference with the meeting.

b. **Voting**

All voting will be undertaken by a show of hands unless the Councillor is connected by audio only in which case the Chairman will ask the individual Councillor by name of how they wish to vote “yes” or “no”.

c. **Poor Connectivity**

In the case of poor connectivity, the Chairman will decide whether to continue with the meeting or to reconvene.

In the case of the video not being available for some or all of the Councillors attending the Chairman can choose to continue but to operate on a roll call for Councillor views on individual agenda items.

d. **Attendance**

If a Councillor is believed to have ‘dropped out’ this will be minuted. If ‘drop outs’ result in the meeting becoming inquorate Councillors will endeavour to re-join for a period of 15 minutes. After 15 minutes if the meeting is still inquorate the Chairman will suspend the meeting and reconvene at a later time and date subject to the statutory days of notice. Councillors will be emailed to advise of the suspension.

## 5. Virtual meeting Etiquette

Normal Standing Orders apply with regard to Conduct at Meetings and all participants are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people experience with regard to the operation of technology.

Behaviour that is contrary to the intended outcomes of the meeting will be dealt with at the discretion of the Chairman. For a member of the public or press this may result in them being dismissed from the Zoom meeting.

## 6. Declaration of Interests

A Councillor who has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be placed in the waiting room by the Clerk or Chairman. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made the Councillor will be returned to the meeting by the Clerk or the Chairman.

## 7. Public Attendance

Please see the **Public Guidance** section at the end of this policy

## 8. Confidential Matters

Confidential matters will be dealt with through a separate Zoom meeting that will be available to Councillors only. On conclusion of the non-confidential matters on an agenda the meeting will be suspended for Councillors to re-join using the confidential Zoom meeting link that will have been provided to Councillors only on the day of the meeting. Decisions made during the confidential session will be advised to the Clerk the following day by the Chairman.

## 9. Recording

The Council will not use the recording function of Zoom

## 10. Information

The chat box on the Zoom meeting will be disabled for all Council meetings.

For further information see The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>

<b>Policy agreed at Wrockwardine Parish Council: 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b>
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<b>Review Date: November 2022</b>
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## Public Guidance

As a member of the public you are welcome to join the Parish Council meeting using a range of devices such as a laptop computer, desktop computer, tablet or phone (Apple or Android devices).

There is greater detail available here, including meetings, to test your equipment (recommended)

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting>

If you wish to attend the Parish meeting please contact the Clerk by email at [clerk@wrockwardine.org.uk](mailto:clerk@wrockwardine.org.uk) or telephone 01952 897355 before 5p.m on the day before the meeting (that is usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month). You should give an indication of whether you wish to speak in the Public Session so that you can be given time to do so. The Clerk will send you the meeting invite before 5p.m on the day of the meeting and this will include the Zoom link. You may be asked to download and install a small app or program to make best use of the resources on your equipment. It will ask for permission to use your microphone and camera and this will be needed to allow you to interact and speak if necessary, at the relevant sections of the meeting.

When you have joined the meeting, you will be held in a “waiting room” and the Clerk or Chairman will let you in once the meeting commences.

Please leave your microphone muted unless asked to do otherwise. You do not have to use your camera unless you wish to, but it may help you to be understood.

Remember that a parish council meeting is by law “a meeting held in public” not a “public meeting”. The law gives members of the public the right to attend and observe but not to speak. Wrockwardine Parish Council provides an opportunity near the start of the meeting for the public to raise a question either relating to an agenda item, or potentially to be considered at a future meeting. This is limited to 15 minutes in total and a maximum of 5 minutes per subject. Those wishing to speak should indicate this when registering to attend so that the necessary time can be allotted.

For the rest of the meeting you are likely to remain muted unless invited to speak by the Chairman. If you wish to speak outside of this you must raise your virtual hand – found in “reactions” at the bottom of the Zoom screen. Alternatively, if joining by telephone, please press \*9 to raise your hand.

Anyone who behaves in an offensive or unacceptable manner will be removed from the meeting and, their actions may be reported to relevant authorities.

Please note: Chairman is used as an official title and not intended to be gender specific