



Virtual Meeting Protocol **West Bedlington Town Council**

Approved Minute Ref	VM209
Date	8th April 2021
Version	2
Last Review	8th Jan 2026
Next Review	Jan 2027

Scope

Meeting protocol for virtual Council / Committee meetings in situations where a physical public meeting is not possible.

The protocol assumes that the meeting is conducted via conferencing software.

Democracy Considerations

The Council recognises that not every Council member will have either access to video conferencing or indeed the knowledge and or confidence to use the technology if they do have access to it.

Video conferencing is freely accessible and can be accessed from a pc, laptop, ipad or smart mobile phone.

The Clerk can initially provide some remote assistance to help members build confidence and knowledge of the platform with some private practice sessions.

If during any periods where only virtual Council meetings are permitted and so long as the meeting is attended by the legal minimum of members (quorum) then regrettably those members who are either unable to attend or feel they cannot attend the virtual meeting will not be permitted to vote any matters considered at the virtual meeting.

The same rules relating to the number of members in attendance (quorum) apply as they would for a physical meeting.

Any member that is unable to attend a virtual meeting (for whatever reason) can apply to the Council for a dispensation for their absence. Members present at the virtual meeting will make a determination with regard to any applications from absent members for dispensations.

Meeting Preparation

1. The Council will aim to restrict the number of agenda items contained within a virtual meeting agenda. Priority will be given to statutory requirements and urgent business that cannot wait for a future meeting. Agendas should be brief and precise.
2. Virtual meetings will aim to last for a maximum of 90 minutes in length.
3. Virtual meeting agenda will include Questions to The Council from residents. Residents may and are positively encouraged to ask questions of the Town Council (business of The Town Council) in advance of the meeting via email to clerk@westbedlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk
4. The Town Clerk will prepare the meeting agenda and include upon it details of the virtual meeting. The documents will include a link to the virtual meeting and will be posted to the Council's website and emailed to the Council's mailing list in advance of the meeting.
5. Admittance to the virtual meeting is via a virtual waiting room. Members of the public and media will be admitted into the meeting on the understanding that they will not interrupt the business of the meeting or otherwise cause disruption to the effective running of the meeting. ALL meeting

attendees should clearly identify themselves – an identifiable name not a device name, IP address or other, users can use the rename option to display their names. The Council reserves the right to refuse entry into the meeting without knowing the identity of the participant.

6. Members of public and media should mute their microphone during the meeting and only “unmute and speak” at the invitation of the meeting Chair.
7. In the event of meeting disruption from a member(s) of the public, the Chair will issue a warning of expulsion to the individual(s) concerned. Failure to comply with the Chair’s warning will result in the individual(s) expulsion from the meeting with no further warning.

During the Meeting

1. The Council Chair (or whoever is the meeting chair in the absence of the Council Chair) will be responsible for the running of the meeting.
2. Decisions will only be made in respect of items on the meeting agenda unless the meeting chair considers the matter is one of urgency that cannot wait for a future meeting.
3. The meeting agenda will be “screen shared” with everyone present during the duration of the meeting.
4. Initially all Council members will be asked to “mute” their microphones and only “unmute and speak” at the invitation of the meeting Chair.
5. Councillors wishing to speak should first “raise their hand” via the software reactions provision and wait to be invited to speak by the Chair.
6. Before moving to a vote on any resolution the Chair will provide an opportunity for each member present to speak (should they so wish).
7. Voting will be the raising of the “thumbs up reaction” to indicate the member is in favour of the proposal. The Clerk will summarise voting before moving onto the next agenda item to ensure votes have been recorded correctly. Individual votes will not be recorded unless a request is made from a Council member before the commencement of the next agenda item.