**MARLDON PARISH COUNCIL**

**PUBLIC FORUM & VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL**

(Adopted 29.10.2020)

**Public Questions, comments or representations**: (extract from the Governance Toolkit as guidance)

**The Public’s Statutory right is to attend meetings and observe. It is a courtesy extended by local councils to invite the public to submit questions at a specified period during the Council Meeting.**

The Parish Council may have arrangements for hearing members of the public. There must be a fixed timescale.

The Matter raised to be formally acknowledged by the Chairman. There must be no discussion at the meeting on the matter, and only matters relating the Agenda will be accepted.

In short the following protocol will be followed:

1. One question per person only
2. 3 Minute talk time per person only
3. Questions can only relate to an Agenda Item relating to that meeting.
4. Response by the Chairman only unless the Chairman requests the Clerk to make a note of the question, action the question, investigate the question or request consideration for the matter to be placed on the agenda for a future meeting.
5. No personal attacks on Councillors or Officers will be tolerated (see full protocol)
6. Representations and Questions can still be submitted to the Clerk, two weeks prior to a meeting for consideration at that meeting. If a question cannot be answered because of privileged, legal or personnel issues the questioner will be told immediately that the Parish Council cannot respond.

**FULL PROTOCOL –** to be published on the Parish Council’s website once adopted

**Remote Meeting Guidelines for members of the public**

The Government have now issued the regulations that give local authorities greater flexibility in the conduct of meetings, including allowing members to attend remotely, and for public and press access to those meetings.

These ‘Regulations’ (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 4 April 2020.

Following the new regulations Marldon Parish Council started holding some Council meetings using the Zoom online meeting platform in July 2020.

Before the meeting The Agenda will be placed on the website and on the notice board (if possible) as normal (i.e. with three clear days of notice). Any member of the public and press who wishes to attend the meeting will need to download Zoom. Please visit https://zoom.us/meetings where you will be able to download the App. The website gives tutorials and demonstrations on how to download Zoom and how to join meetings.

The Clerk will put a link, on the website, to join the Zoom meeting by 5pm on the day of the meeting. The Clerk will also include the meeting ID and password.

Members of the public are welcome to send any questions or comments to the Clerk prior to the meeting via email to, or by calling the Clerk. These must be received 48hrs before the meeting. (normal meetings only, not Extraordinary Meetings)

The Clerk will present any representations received to the Councillors to address.

The Chair of the Council will Chair the meeting with the assistance of the Clerk if requested.

The Clerk of the Council will host the meeting on Zoom. Members of the public will enter a “waiting room” on Zoom and wait for the Clerk to approve their attendance.

It would be helpful if members of the public could “name their videos” so that the Chair and Clerk can refer to them correctly.

There will be no ‘chat’ option during the meeting, as members of the public are observers only, other than during the Public Forum/Question section.

All attendees will be muted on entry to the meeting.

Members of the public will be able to make representation during the public forum. Members of the public will be asked to “put their hand up” if they wish to speak during the public forum. The Clerk will “unmute” members of the public who wish to speak at the instruction of the Chair. The Protocol for the Public Forum/Question is listed below.

At the conclusion of the public forum the Clerk will “mute” all members of the public. 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.

**Questions from Parishioners Guidelines**

* The Chairman will decide in which order matters will be heard.
* The Chairman will inform the questioner whether there will be a response in writing to the matter which will be provided within 10 working days. Request the Clerk deals with the matter or Request the Clerk to consider inclusion on the Agenda for the next meeting.
* Each member of the public is entitled to speak once in respect of each matter and for a maximum of 3 minutes, with 15 minutes being allocated overall for the questions from parishioners’ section
* Questions must be addressed through the chair. All those present will act respectfully and will not act in a manner that demeans, insults, threatens or intimidates others. Offensive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated and the Parish Council reserves the right to curtail the contribution of and exclude anyone acting in this manner.
* Questions, comments and responses will be minuted concisely. Members of the public who participate in this section of the agenda must specify their name and address to confirm their residency within the parish – but names/addresses will not be published.
* If a member of the public is not prepared to disclose their credentials, the question can be forwarded in writing to the Clerk.
* Questions must relate to the business of the council, be a matter for which the council has responsibility or related to the well-being of the parish and included on the Agenda for the current meeting.
* Parish councillors may ask any member of the parish council and any Officer of the parish council any question relating to the business of the council. Such questions may only be asked at ordinary meetings of the council.
* The chairman, or clerk, may reject a question, or a supplementary question, if it is not about a matter over which the council has responsibility, it is defamatory, frivolous, abusive or substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the council in the past 6 months, requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information. Where a question has been rejected a letter will be sent to the questioner setting out the reasons for the rejection.
* If any person submits more than one question at any meeting, only their first question shall be asked and answered. If after all other questions have been asked and answered there is sufficient time available, the Chairman of the Council may ask the questioner(s) to ask their further question(s) in such order as the Chairman determines.
* The Chairman has the discretion to alter the order in which questions are asked.
* Councils and other local government bodies are required to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio-record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings. **Prior permission is required** to carry out this activity, it is advisable that any person wishing to film or audio-record a public meeting let the Clerk know so that all necessary arrangements can be made for the public meeting.