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# Guide for members of the public participating in a remote Council meeting (includes committees etc)

## Introduction

This Guide needs to be read in conjunction with the Council **Resolution** passed on 10 September 2020 and with the Council's **Constitution**.

The Council has also published a **Protocol** setting out how remote meetings are run and this includes specific reference to public participation – **you are advised to read the Protocol if you will be participating in a remote meeting.**

There is also **Guidance** for Council Members about engaging in Zoom meetings and although this is very much aimed at Members, the public may find some of the contents (eg about lighting, video, audio, etc) useful.

## Zoom

The Council uses Zoom Webinar to conduct remote meetings and stream them live to YouTube. Public participants can engage in a Zoom meeting purely by connecting to the remote meeting via the web, but may prefer to download the Zoom app beforehand if they haven't already done so.

## Overview

A fundamental element of the way in which the public can participate in remote meetings is to distinguish between Zoom Webinar Panellists and Zoom Webinar Attendees.

In essence, there are three ways of engaging in/viewing a remote meeting of the Council that is being live streamed via YouTube:

- Zoom Webinar Panellists are “in the meeting room” and seen on screen – they can (subject to their video feed being switched on) see other Panellists and be seen by them, and (subject to being unmuted) be heard by Panellists and Attendees.
- Zoom Webinar Attendees are “in the meeting ante-room” and not seen on screen - they can see and hear the Panellists but not be seen or heard themselves.
- Viewers are not in the remote meeting in any sense but can view the proceedings via YouTube.

Members of the public who are going to engage in a remote meeting, and who follow the steps set out in this Guide, will be able to join the remote meeting as an Attendee and, when their time comes to speak, will be moved from Attendee to Panellist status.

They will only be treated as being “in the meeting” for so long as they are asking their question or addressing the remote meeting (eg answering questions on a submission) and will be moved back to Attendee status once that involvement is concluded.

## Specific rules

Please note the three sections that follow, relating to questions at remote meetings, submissions to planning committee meetings, and other ways the public might engage in a remote meeting.



# Public questions at a remote public meeting (if permitted by the Constitution)

## Asking a question and registering to participate in the remote meeting

- If, where permitted by the Constitution, you want to ask a question at a remote meeting of the Council, Executive, Health and Wellbeing Board, etc, you will need to submit your question in writing (quoting the date of the remote meeting, who your question is addressed to, and providing an email address):
  - by completing the **on-line form**; or
  - by email to [executivecycle@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:executivecycle@westberks.gov.uk); or
  - by post, delivery, etc, to the Council's Market Street office;within the time limits set out in the Constitution (eg questions that do not relate to an item for business for the particular remote meeting must be submitted no later than 10:00, seven clear working days before the remote meeting).
- So long as you have:
  - submitted a written question in accordance with the Constitution which has been accepted; and
  - provided an email address at the same time;you will receive a web-link by email to register to participate in the remote meeting.
- You must then register by no later than 16:00 two working days before the meeting to receive a meeting invite – this will be unique to you and must not be shared with anyone.

## Joining the remote meeting

- On the day of the remote meeting you will need to join the remote meeting ten minutes before it starts – you will be held in a virtual ante-room (please see the **Protocol** for details about what Attendees need to do to join the remote meeting).

## Process in the remote meeting

- At the point of the remote meeting that the chairman of the remote meeting (“the Chairman”) calls on you for your question:
  - you will be changed from being an Attendee to being a Panellist\* (you may lose sight of the remote meeting for a moment whilst this takes place) but you will not be treated as being “in the meeting” until you are called on to speak;
  - the Chairman will refer to your question (generally this will be displayed on screen at the same time) and invite the Member responding to give an oral answer;
  - the Chairman or the Member responding will then ask you if you have a supplementary question and to ask it if you do;
  - the Member in question will then respond as necessary; and
  - once concluded you will cease to be “in the room” and be made an Attendee again;
  - (\*the Chairman or Host may bring more than one Attendee at a time into the remote meeting as Panellists to assist with the smooth running of the remote meeting, but each will not be “in the meeting” until called on to speak).
- As with any meeting, the Chairman may curtail a question or require you to stop speaking if they consider it necessary for the orderly running of the remote meeting. If this happens the Chairman may instruct the Host to mute and/or make you an Attendee again.
- As was the case pre-Covid:
  - your ability to ask questions and supplementaries is subject to time being available in accordance with the Constitution; and
  - questions will be taken in the order determined by the Chairman.

# Making a submission and answering any questions relating to it at a remote planning committee meeting

## Making a submission to a remote planning committee meeting

- If you are an interested party (applicant/supporter/objector/representative of a parish or town council) wishing to make a representation to a remote planning committee meeting (a “remote meeting”) you are required to send a 500 word (maximum) written submission to the Council’s Planning Team as below.
- The covering letter or email should quote the application reference and the date of the remote meeting and, if you want to attend the remote meeting as detailed further below, provide an email address.
- The written submission must be sent by no later than 12:00, two days before the remote meeting (eg by 12:00 on the Monday for a remote planning committee meeting to be held the following Wednesday):
  - by email to [planningcommittee@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:planningcommittee@westberks.gov.uk); or
  - by post, delivery, etc, to the Council’s Market Street office.

## Registering to participate in the remote meeting

- So long as you have:
  - sent in a written submission as set out above; and
  - provided an email address at the same time;you will receive a web-link by email to register to participate in the remote meeting.
- You must then register by no later than 16:00 on the working day before the meeting to receive a meeting invite – this will be unique to you and must not be shared with anyone.
- Where more than one person from the same group of interested parties has sent in a submission and provided an email address, each will be able to register.

## Joining the remote meeting

- On the day of the remote meeting you will need to join the remote meeting ten minutes before it starts – you will be held in a virtual ante-room (please see the [Protocol](#) for details about what Attendees need to do to join the remote meeting).

## Process in the remote meeting

- At the appropriate stage of the remote meeting:
  - the Clerk or another officer will, in turn, read out each submission or, if there is more than one submission from any group of interested parties (“group”), a summary of those submissions;
  - you (and any other members of the group who have registered to participate) will be changed from being an Attendee to being a Panellist (you may lose sight of the remote meeting for a moment whilst this takes place) but you will not be treated as being “in the meeting” until you are called on to speak;
  - the Chairman will refer to your submission and ask the committee members if they have any questions relating to it (or questions for any other member of your group on their submissions); and
  - once all questioning is concluded you will cease to be “in the room” and be made an Attendee again.
- Please note that there is no right to be asked a question – that is up to the members of the committee.

## **Public involvement in other remote public meetings**

### **Licensing sub-committee meetings**

Public participation rights at these meetings were explicitly excluded from the Resolution and will continue to be - since interested parties have a statutory right to attend, all such interested parties will be invited to be Panellists at all stages, with the Chairman regularly checking that everyone has heard everything.

### **Any other remote meeting where a member of the public might be permitted to speak**

Where it has previously been custom and practice for a committee to suspend standing orders to allow members of the public attending a meeting to speak, eg members of the taxi trade in relation to a Licensing Committee meeting considering a report relevant to that trade, or external auditors attending a Governance and Ethics Committee meeting in relation to an audit report, such individuals will be invited to join the remote meeting, or will be sent a web-link to register, as Attendees (similarly to the same process as for public questions – see above).

If you are such an individual and join the remote meeting as an Attendee, and if the committee agrees to suspend standing orders to permit such, you will then be changed to Panellist status at the relevant juncture to answer questions, etc. Once that section of the meeting has concluded you will be changed back to Attendee status and the remote meeting will resume standing orders.

## Document Control

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## Change History

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1		First version
2	08.01.21	Change the notice period for notifying officers of attendance to ask questions
3		