Virtual Meeting Policy

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Policy Purpose:

During the period 4 April 2020 until 6 May 2021, Parish Councils were given provision under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations") to hold legal virtual meetings in order that Parish Council business could be maintained. From May 2021 onwards, Parish Council and Committee meetings required all Councillors to meet in person (i.e. to be physically present) and to permit members of the public to attend meetings. In addition to face-to-face monthly meetings, Meriden Parish Council has chosen to permit members of the public, and the Clerk/Deputy Clerk, to attend all public Parish Council meetings virtually. This policy sets out the conduct expected from members of the public attending Council meetings remotely.

Main Body:

A variety of different platforms including Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts or Zoom are available.

1. The Parish Council has chosen to use the Microsoft Teams platform in order that the meetings are publicly available. The Clerk will Host the meeting using the Parish Council account.
2. The meetings will be formal Parish Council meetings and will be held using the agenda and summons which the Clerk has published. It will be governed by the usual Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and associated policies.
3. A code and link to the virtual meeting will be published on the agenda (which will also be placed on Parish Council noticeboards and on the website) to permit the public to attend.
4. Attendees will collect in the Teams 'waiting room' prior to the meeting. The 'Host' (the Clerk) will have the ability to mute or remove anyone whose behaviour is deemed unacceptable at the Chairman's request.
5. All attendees must enter their name otherwise they will not be permitted to attend the meeting.
6. All attendees will be set to 'mute' on entry to the meeting and only the Chairman of the meeting will remain unmuted. All other participants, if they wish to speak, will be invited to unmute.
7. All Councillor attendees will display their name in order for the public to be able to identify them.
8. In order to protect participants from malware, the 'chat', file sharing and screen sharing function will be disabled during the meeting. If necessary, the Clerk will display any documents required using the 'share screen' function.

9. As with meetings in the pavilion, members of the public will be given the opportunity to speak during the public participation session, but will not be permitted, unless invited to do so by the Chairman, to speak at other times.
10. Anyone wanting to speak should raise their hand using ‘raise hand’ in the options within the Participants section.
11. The Councillor participants will introduce themselves. Members of the public may introduce themselves if they should wish.
12. Meeting participants may wish to protect their personal environment by choosing a virtual background or alternatively should consider what can be seen behind them while on camera.
13. Meriden Parish Council will record meetings for the purpose of writing minutes and recordings will be deleted once the minutes have been approved at the next available Council meeting; meetings will be stored in line with GDPR policies.