



Sedgefield

Town Council

VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

Passionate about Sedgefield

north east
england

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

INDEX:

No.	Item:	Page No:
1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Regulations Overview	3
2.1	Part One – General	3
2.2	Part Two – Remote Access	4
2.3	Part Three – Modification of Meeting and Public Access Requirements	5
3.0	Purpose Of This Protocol	6
4.0	Virtual Meeting ‘Platform’ – Planning and Preparation In The Use of Microsoft Teams	6
5.0	Standing Orders	7
6.0	Meeting Agenda and Papers	7
7.0	Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements	8
7.1	Meeting Attendance	8
7.2	Recording Meetings	8
7.3	Behaviour and Conduct	9
7.4	Declaring Interests	9
7.5	Council Discussions	9
7.6	Voting	11
8.0	Public Participation	11
9.0	Exempt Matters	12
10.0	After The Meeting	12
11.0	Sources of Reference	12
APPENDICES:		
A	Amendments To Standing Orders Valid Until 7th May 2021	14
B	Public Participation Information Sheet	18

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

1. **Introduction:**

Sedgefield Town Council recognises the opportunities offered by meeting virtually in times that a physical meeting is not appropriate and has developed this protocol to assist Councillors, Officers, members of the public and press to understand how these meetings differ from a physical meeting and to assist people to engage in debate and decision making. This protocol is to be delivered within “The Local Authority (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020” and that are currently enacted for meeting on and up to 7th May 2021.

2. **Regulations Overview:**

The Government has issued Regulations that give local authorities greater flexibility in the conduct of meetings, including allowing Councillors 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 4th April 2020. The measures will help Town and Parish Councils redeploy their resources to deal with the pandemic and ensure essential business continues whilst upholding democratic principles and protecting the health and safety of Councillors, Officers and the public in-line with official public health guidance. The Regulations further modify existing legislative provisions to remove the requirement for Town and Parish Councils to hold an annual meeting.

The remainder of this section provides a summary of the pertinent points of the Regulations but if you wish to have 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>

2.1. **Part One - General:**

This section of the Regulations makes it clear that a ‘local authority’ includes Town and Parish Councils and a ‘local authority meeting’ includes meetings of a Committee or Sub-Committee.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

2.2. Part Two – Remote Access:

Regulation 4 makes it clear that until 7th May 2021, Town and Parish Council meetings may be held at such an hour and day as they may determine without requirement for further notice. Similarly, Town and Parish Councils can alter the frequency, move or cancel such meetings without requirement for further notice. The initial obligation to provide three clear days' notice of Town and Parish Councils meetings will continue.

Regulation 5 provides guidance on what 'remote access' and 'remote attendance' is. It states that a reference in any enactment to a meeting of a Town or Parish Council is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a "place" where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers. In simple terms this enables meetings to take place simultaneously across varied sites. The Regulation continues by stating that a member of a local authority is in remote attendance if the member is able (whilst in remote attendance):

- To hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,
- To hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and
- To be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

If there is any prohibition or other restriction contained in the Standing Orders or any other rules of the Town or Parish Council governing the meeting then any such prohibition or restriction has no effect. The Town or Parish Council may make other Standing Orders and any other rules of the authority governing the meeting about remote attendance at Town or Parish Council meetings, which may include provision for:

- a) Voting;
- b) Member/public access to documents; and
- c) Remote access to public/press to a Town or Parish Council meeting to enable them to attend or participate in that meeting.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

2.3. Part Three – Modification Of Meeting and Public Access Requirements:

Regulation 6 deals with the frequency of Town and Parish Council meetings including the Annual Meeting. Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act ('LGA') 1972 is amended (until 7th May 2021) as follows:

- Any reference to being present will now include where someone is present via 'remote attendance'
- Any reference to a 'place' where a meeting is held will include reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers
- Section 7 of Schedule 12 of LGA 1972 is disapplied. This removes the need to hold an annual meeting in 2020. This does not mean a Town or Parish Council cannot hold an annual meeting (such a meeting would need to be subject to the revisions regarding notice etc).

Regulations 13 – 17 deal with Public and Press Access. Regulation 13 amends Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. The existing requirements of the public notice of the time and place of meetings is amended so that this obligation is met if a notice is published on the website of the principal council within the meaning of the LGA 1972. The SLCC suspect this is a drafting error and that the intention was for this to require posting on the Town or Parish Council website – aside from the fact that it could be problematic to post notice of such a meeting on the principal council's website, it of course makes sense for such postings to be on the Town or Parish Council website. However, as the legislation currently stands, solely posting on the Town or Parish Council website will not satisfy this requirement. The position of the SLCC, and having discussed this with NALC, is that posting on the Town or Parish Council website will suffice for the purpose of these Regulations. If possible, it is prudent to also post on the principal council's website. It is hoped that there will be an amendment to rectify this soon.

Additionally, there appears to be a further anomaly within the Regulations. As the 10(2) legal obligation in Part II of Schedule 12 of LGA 1972 has not been disapplied, this would suggest that the general requirements regarding the fixing of any notice of meetings three clear days before a meeting of the Town or Parish Council 'in some conspicuous place in the parish' and the signature obligations by 'those members [of the Town or Parish Council]' will continue to apply. Again, the SLCC and NALC have discussed this

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

and believe that so long as a purposive and common sense approach to this will probably not be met with much criticism by the judiciary, if circumstances dictate that due to health and safety matters etc this cannot be complied with to the letter.

In order to meet the requirements to being “open to the public”, this will now include where access is provided through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.

These Regulations appear to put in place a sensible and modern framework to enable Town and Parish Council business to continue and it may be that this provides a structure for the future of Town and Parish Councils.

3. Purpose of This Protocol:

The purpose of this protocol is to support Councillors and Officers as they participate in virtual meetings and to give them the clarity as to how such meetings will run and the confidence to participate in them effectively.

4. Virtual Meeting ‘Platform’ - Planning and Preparation in the Use of Microsoft Teams:

Prior to the COVID 19 lockdown restrictions Sedgefield Town Council approved to invest in its IT infrastructure to enable office based staff to work from home through robust and secure remote desktop working, providing access to all Town Council electronic data and Edge software. As part of this working routine, and to work with external key contacts such as Edge, Evolve and Internal Auditor, the Town Council has fully utilised Microsoft Teams as its platform to enable virtual meetings. As part of this work a training programme was put in place to enable all office based Town Council staff to be trained in Teams and start using it, then to roll this out initially to volunteer Councillors who form the Finance Working Group in order to progress the Council’s year end accounts and then finally to roll out to all other willing Councillors in order to work towards virtual Town Council meetings. The programme included clear instruction for setting up Microsoft Teams, initial one to two meetings with members of Town Council staff and then “meet and greet” sessions attended by multiple Councillors in order to build confidence before actual meetings taking place. Copies of this Protocol were circulated to all Cllrs and explained prior to the Council’s first virtual Special Town Council meeting.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

Microsoft Teams is a collaboration and conversational platform as part of Office 365 which will be used by Sedgefield Town Council to enable video and audio conferencing for persons using mobile devices, desktops and fixed room systems. It also includes the following facilities:

- Within meetings you can share screens and record your meeting
- Participants can join meetings, without joining Teams by clicking on the email link
- Previous meeting notes and recording can be accessed
- The platform allows for 250 participants in one meeting but limits the number of participants on screen to 4 at a time (at the time of writing this protocol, however, Microsoft Teams is currently working on increasing this number of on-screen images to 9).

5.0. Standing Orders:

Standing Orders will be used to guide any virtual meeting in a similar way as if persons were present in a place. The intention is to maintain as much as possible the usual approach to Sedgefield Town Council meetings and adhere to our Standing Orders as much as possible. A virtual meeting is still a usual Council meeting albeit with the need for more advanced consideration as to how discussions and voting will be managed in order to permit the meeting to run as smoothly as possible. All those attending a virtual meeting are expected to be mindful of the difficulties people can experience with regard to the operation of technology. See Appendix A for amendments to the Town Council's Standing Orders which are valid until 7th May 2021.

6.0. Meeting Agenda and Papers:

Councillors are to be summonsed as normal via a meeting agenda along with supporting documentation required for the meeting. Included in the digital agenda will be a link for Councillors, Officers and members of the press and public to access the meeting. During the pandemic situation every effort will be made to issue supporting documentation electronically, however, this may not always be possible and when this is the case documentation will be issued using the postal service. A copy of the agenda will also be placed on the Town Council's website, however, in-line with the new Regulations will not be placed on physical noticeboards. Such meetings will be promoted via the Council's Twitter account with the instruction that if any person is unable to access the Town

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

Council's website they must contact the Town Clerk via email to request an electronic copy of the agenda.

7.0. Specific Virtual Meeting Arrangements:

7.1. Meeting Attendance:

It is recommended that Councillors and Officers select the Microsoft Teams white background or blur the background to ensure the privacy of their home surroundings when attending a virtual meeting.

Each virtual meeting will include a dedicated moderator who will oversee the technical aspects of the meeting such as ensuring attendees are admitted, muting microphones when required etc. It is not possible for the Town Clerk to perform this role and also participate in a meeting, ensure this protocol is followed, the agenda is adhered to and minutes are taken. The role of dedicated moderator will be performed by the Projects & Media Co-ordinator. The only exception to this would be for any virtual Personnel Committee meeting during which the Town Clerk would need to perform all roles.

At the appointed meeting start time the Chairman will perform a roll call of Councillors to ensure that they are in attendance. The sequence of that roll call is detailed in section 7.5. Participants in a meeting can be tracked by the administrator by checking the 'show participants' tab. As the meeting progresses if a Councillor is believed to have 'dropped out' this will be minuted. It is possible that drop outs can be caused by poor connectivity. 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 telephoned or emailed to advise of the suspension of the meeting.

7.2. Recording Meetings:

The Town Council's requirement to record meetings continues. Council meetings undertaken virtually through Microsoft Teams will be video recorded to assist the Clerk with the production of subsequent minutes and are for this purpose only. These recordings will be deleted following approval of minutes.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

7.3. Behaviour and Conduct:

The required standards of behaviour and conduct by Councillors are the same regardless of whether a meeting takes place remotely or face to face. It is recognised that these are difficult times and people may be worried about their health or family members, they may be frustrated at being isolated at home, and there may be challenges with using new technology particularly if there are technical difficulties. Everyone in the meeting will need to be respectful and compassionate towards one another, emotions may be higher than usual but that only makes it more important that everyone approaches the meeting with respect and in the spirit of the Council's Code of Conduct. It is essential that all meeting attendees, including members of the public and press, give due attention to the matters being discussed and multi-tasking (such as reading emails or watching TV) is eliminated. 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 meeting.

7.4. Declaring Interests:

A Councillor's duty to declare any interest(s) in the matters to be discussed on a meeting agenda must still be declared in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders. A Councillor that has declared an interest that requires them to leave the meeting will be removed from the meeting by the moderator. On conclusion of the item for which the declaration is made the Councillor will be invited back into the meeting by the moderator via the 'ask to join' feature.

7.5. Council Discussions:

The Chairman of the Council will Chair Monthly Meetings and Special Town Council meetings in accordance with Standing Orders. Other Chairs will continue to chair any of their Committees which are required to meet virtually. Each will take the opportunity of any practice meetings to ensure they are confident following the agenda, managing input from Councillors and Officers, and keeping the meeting to time. Some suggestions to aid this are:

- Throughout the meeting only the Chair and Clerk will remain unmuted throughout. All other attendees will be expected to mute themselves when not

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

speaking – this helps keep background noise to a minimum which will improve everyone’s ability to hear the discussions.

- It is essential that all Councillors have the opportunity to speak and equally important that everyone understands who is speaking at any given time for minuting purposes. The Chair of the meeting will give each Councillor the opportunity to speak on an agenda item. The Chair will ask each Councillor in accordance with surname alphabetical order to speak as follows:

BLAKEMORE	Allan
BROWN	David
CANT	Mark
CARMICHAEL	Vanessa
CARR	Ann
CARR	Mel
LINES	Chris
MCCORMACK	Leo
TOWLER	Julie
WALTON	Alf
WARRANT	Fiona
WAYMAN	Mavis
WILLS	Gloria
WINTER	Kathrine
WINTER	Stephen

Prior to speaking each Councillor must clearly state their name and then clearly and concisely state their point. This may take more time than in a ‘normal’ meeting but should ensure a controlled approach.

- If a Councillor wishes to contribute a point in response to a comment by another Councillor, or provide useful information to the Chairman before the end of the agenda item, the Councillor may use the ‘raise your hand’ function or type in the ‘show conversation’ tab to indicate that they would like to speak. The Chair then has the right to give that Councillor a chance to talk if appropriate. Please note: the ‘raise your hand’ feature is only currently available on computers or laptops.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

- Throughout the meeting it is important to keep a record of who is 'present'. It may be the case that some individuals have technical issues that mean that they 'leave' the meeting, for example their internet connection means that they are cut off. The Chair will perform a quick 'roll call' before each agenda item to ensure the Clerk is able to accurately minute who was present.

7.6. Voting

There is no 'right way' to conduct voting in a remote meeting but it is essential to ensure that when a vote is necessary that robust arrangements are in place to ensure outcomes are accurately recorded. Upon a proposal being made and then seconded with agreement that a vote then be taken the Chair will use the roll call of Councillors shown in 7.1 and ask each individual to state their name and then state their vote. Following votes being cast by each Councillor the Clerk will read back the votes cast so that everyone can ensure their vote has been recorded correctly.

8.0. Public Participation:

Council meetings must still be advertised (albeit via website and not noticeboards) and the public have a right to observe and continue to ensure they have the opportunity to ask questions or make comments when it is appropriate to do so according to the meeting's agenda. It is important to try to keep to the usual way in which public participation is dealt with by a Council. Public Participation will continue to be a standing agenda item on Monthly and all Committee meeting agendas. If we do have members of the public and/or press attending a virtual meeting the Chair should take some time at the beginning of the meeting to explain to them how the meeting will run and how and when they can speak. This will help to manage their expectations. Upon reaching the appropriate point in the Council's agenda, the Chair will close the meeting in order to allow the public to speak. It is the Chair's responsibility to remind members of the public of the rules regarding public participation and of the time limit which they have in order to speak. The Chair will also state that if a member of the public wishes to have their name recorded in the minutes of the meeting they must state their name before speaking. The 'conversation' or 'raise your hand' function of the Microsoft Teams will be the means by which a member of the public indicates that they wish to speak, however, for any member of the public who will be attending the meeting using a tablet or mobile phone they may not have access to this facility so should contact the Town Clerk on

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

town.clerk@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk by no later than 12 noon on the working day before the meeting to express their wish to speak during public participation. Appendix B details the procedure for Public Participation and will be promoted as a stand-alone guidance document on the Town Council's website to assist the public. It is only when a member of the public is speaking during public participation that their microphone will be unmuted.

9.0 Exempt Matters:

It is standard procedure to have Exempt Matters placed onto Council agendas when there are matters which need to be discussed once members of the public and press have been excluded from the meeting due to the confidential and sensitive nature of their content. Arrangements for virtual meetings must also be such that exempt matters can be dealt with appropriately. Upon conclusion of the non-confidential matters on the agenda the meeting will be suspended to allow the moderator to remove all members of press and public from the meeting in order to declare confirmation of confidentiality. Councillors and Officers attending meetings virtually must be aware of their surroundings. Confidentiality and sensitivity of information must be considered, and conversations must not be conducted in a place where they will be overheard.

10.0 After the Meeting:

Draft minutes will continue to be produced by the Clerk following each Council meeting. These will then be presented to the next Monthly Meeting (whether virtual or face to face) for approval and in the case of minutes from Monthly and Committee meetings placed on the Town Council's website. Following approval of minutes these can always be retrospectively signed at the next face to face meeting or a time when it is safe to do so within the current social distancing restrictions.

After each virtual meeting the Clerk will review the way in which the procedures have worked and if necessary make recommendations for amendment at subsequent meetings. Councillors are also requested to forward to the Clerk any concerns or comments which they may have so that these can be considered and investigated.

11.0 Sources of Reference:

- "Advice on Virtual Meetings In England" article by Robert Foulke, SLCC's Legal Advisor, The Clerk Magazine May 2020

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

- “Holding Remote Meetings” by NALC 2020
- “L01-20 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 by NALC 3rd April 2020
- “Broadclyst Parish Council Virtual Meeting Policy”

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

**APPENDIX A –
AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS
VALID UNTIL 7TH MAY 2021**

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

The highlighted section in **yellow** are amendments from the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

From this moment on the “Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020” shall be referred to as LAPCP Regulations 2020.

Meetings Generally

Remote Meetings

- a) **Meetings shall take place at a time and date as the Council shall determine** LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 2 Regulation 4(a) or in the interest of Council maintaining an open and transparent policy and in the spirit of cohesiveness the usual following guidelines may still be followed: Standing orders 3e and f
- b) **Council may alter the frequency, move or cancel such meetings.** LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 2 Regulation 4(a).
- c) **A meeting of a local authority is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and at any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations, such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.** LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 2 Regulation 5(1)
- d) **Members (including members of the public) in remote attendance attends the meeting at any time if all of the conditions in sub-section are satisfied: (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance, (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.** LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 2 Regulation 5 (2) (3) and (4).

Member and public access to documents and remote access of public and press to a local authority meeting to enable them to attend or participate in that meeting by electronic means,

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

including by telephone conference, video conference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming. LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 2 Regulation 6(b) (c).

A meeting being “open to the public” includes access to the meeting through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming and where a meeting is accessible to the public through such remote means the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person; LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 2 Regulation 13(a).

Being “present” at a meeting includes access through remote means mentioned in paragraph (a) above LAPCP Regulations Part 2 Regulation 13(b).

The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:

- i. The time and media used to conduct the meeting;
- b) In such a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council decides. This no longer applies until May 2021 LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 6(c)
- c) If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm. This no longer applies until May 2021 LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 6(c)

The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (if there is one) of the Council. This no longer applies until May 2021 LAPCP Regulations 2020 Part 6(c)

The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the Chairman of the meeting at the next available meeting of the Council in person and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

If the Chairman of the meeting does not consider the minute to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect, **at the next available meeting of the Council in person**

“The Chairman of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of Sedgefield Town Council held on [date] in respect of [] were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings”.

27. GENERAL RULES OF REMOTE HELD MEETINGS

(Valid until 7th May 2021)

- a. Members (including the public) asked to mute their device when they are not speaking.
- b. Roll call to be taken at the beginning of the meeting to determine those Councillors present for those who do not have a video link
- c. Members to state their name when they are speaking for those who do not have a video link.
- d. Votes taken to be read back to ensure everyone’s vote is recorded accurately.
- e. The Chairman to remind everyone to be respectful to each other.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

**APPENDIX B –
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET**

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

Welcome to Sedgefield Town Council's Virtual Meeting.

The purpose of this information sheet is to explain how you can participate in the Council meeting should you wish to under the Public Participation element of our agenda.

Members of the public are welcome to virtually attend and under the Public Participation element of the agenda speak at a Council meeting. Members of the public can join the meeting as a guest by clicking the "Join Microsoft Teams Meeting" link at the top of the Council's agenda. This will take you into a virtual lobby and you will be admitted to the meeting by the meeting's moderator who will duly inform the Chairman of the meeting.

Please do not join the meeting more than 5 minutes prior to the start time.

Your microphone must be muted at all times other than during the 3 minutes you are given during the Public Participation agenda item. The Chairman reserves the right to mute your microphone if it is not already muted when the meeting commences.

At the start of the Public Participation element of the agenda the Chairman will close the meeting and invite members of the public and/or press to make comments or ask questions on items contained within the meeting's agenda. If a member of the public or press wish to speak they need to show their intention to do so by stating their name in the "show conversation" box or clicking the 'raise your hand' button. At this point their microphone will be unmuted by the moderator and they will be able to speak. The 'raise your hand' and 'show conversation' facilities may not be available on a tablet or mobile phone. If you are using either of these devices you must notify the Town Council via town.clerk@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk by no later than 12 noon on the working day before the meeting of your wish to speak during public participation.

Please note:

- This is not a question and answer or a debating time, rather an opportunity for you to make your views known to Councillors or to bring forward new ideas which you would like the Council to discuss. The period of time designated for public participation at a Council meeting, in accordance with our Standing Orders, shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting. Again, in accordance with our Standing Orders, each member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes. If there is an interested group of objectors or supporters it is recommended that a spokesperson is appointed to speak on behalf of the group to ensure effective use of the time permitted.
- Speakers should restrict their comments to Agenda items only.
- The Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions and irrelevant points being raised to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time.
- Speakers are asked not to come forward if their points have already been covered.
- After the public speaking period has finished the Chairman will reconvene the meeting and work through the rest of the meeting's agenda. The public and/or press will take no further part in the meeting other than to observe.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21

- All attendees at the meeting are asked to offer all speakers the courtesy of listening to others' points of view, even if they do not agree with it.
- The Chairman will not tolerate any interruptions from the public and is entitled to exclude people from the meeting if the business of the committee cannot be carried out effectively, including removing you from the virtual meeting.

Inclusivity:

We appreciate virtual meetings are not easy for everybody to attend. Should you have any special needs or require any reasonable adjustments to help you to make individual contributions, please contact the Town Clerk office in advance via town.clerk@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk or you can submit a question or comment in advance of the meeting for this to be read out on your behalf.

If you have any minor issues i.e. street lights not working, litter problems etc then please email the Town Clerk on town.clerk@sedgefieldtowncouncil.gov.uk for this matter to be processed on your behalf.

Thank you for attending the meeting.

Version:	Officer Responsible:	Adoption Date:	Review Date:
1.0	Jane Ayre, Town Clerk	26.05.20	07.05.21