



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

MPC(21)52.08

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS OF FULL COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES AFTER 6 MAY 2021

Background

Councillors will have already seen the information from SALC setting out the expiry of the remote meetings regulations on 6 May 2021 following the failed High Court action last week. That means that from 7 May councils will no longer be able to hold meetings via Zoom or other remote platforms.

Implications for Melton

Anticipating that this would happen, Melton held its Annual Parish Meeting via Zoom on 28 April and The Council is holding its Annual General Meeting on 5 May, again via Zoom.

By law, pending step 3 of the roadmap out of lockdown which is scheduled to be implemented on 17 May, no meetings can be held at all. Melton has none scheduled for that period.

After 17 May whilst councils must meet face to face, the Government is recommending that until 20 June (the predicted date when all restrictions will be removed) remote facilities continue to be used to facilitate public access.

After 20 June, normal life is expected to resume, although at this stage it is not clear for how long social distancing and wearing masks will be required in meetings.

Venues will need to have risk assessments carried out and applicable government advice followed. Whilst social distancing requirements are to be maintained, obviously larger venues may need to be sought to allow compliance.

Members who feel too vulnerable to yet attend a physical meeting can attend remotely. However they cannot vote. They would have to give their apologies and ask for their absence to be approved. If approved then the absence would not count under the 'persistent absence' rule (s85(1) Local Government Act 1972). There is nothing to prevent a council from approving a reason for absence in advance (s85(3) Local in

order Government Act 1972). If Members seek to absent themselves in this way then regard will need to be had to the need to maintain a quorum at meetings.

Recommendations

Councillors are recommended to pass the following resolutions:

1. As a precaution against any further sudden lockdown or other unforeseen business interruption, the Council should resolve to put in place a scheme of delegation on the lines of: **“Where it is necessary to maintain essential Council business, responsibility for decision-making can be delegated to the Clerk / Assistant Clerk in conjunction with the Chair of the Council / Vice Chairs / Chairs of Committees as appropriate. The decision as to when to implement such delegation to be made by agreement of all the above Members.”** [Such delegation will be in addition to the emergency powers already held by the Clerk under Financial Regulation 4.5.]
2. If practicable, meetings scheduled for the period up to 20 June should provide remote access facilities for members of the public who might wish to attend.
3. Thereafter, whilst social distancing is still required, meetings of Full Council are to take place at a larger venue (either the school or Burness Parish Rooms) to facilitate compliance and meet insurance requirements.
4. Where Members feel for genuine medical reasons that they are not able to resume face to face meetings, to grant approval in advance for absence from Council meetings.

William Grosvenor

Clerk and Executive Officer to the Council

4 May 2021