**Background:** The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allow local councils to hold remote meetings. The regulations give automatic authority to hold remote meetings and amend standing orders as required. These regulations remain in force until May 7th, 2021 or earlier if repealed, and require a number of temporary changes to Standing Orders.

**General:** This Protocol and Procedures should be read in conjunction with the Council’s standing orders. The Regulations made under s78 of Coronavirus Act 2020 apply and where there is a conflict between these and any other adopted standing orders or legislation, these Remote Meetings Procedures take precedence in relation to any remote meeting.

**1) Annual Meeting**

a) The requirement to hold an Annual Meeting of the Council is to be disregarded and prior to May 7th, 2021 may only take place

i) where called by the Chair or

ii) following a resolution calling for an annual meeting being passed at an ordinary or extra ordinary meeting of the Council.

**2) Access to Information**

a) Where a document is required to be ‘open to inspection’ this shall include published on the website of the council.

b) Where a document is required to be published, this shall include published on the website of the council.

c) Where there is a requirement to publish information including public notices, agendas, minutes, background papers and written reports, this shall include published on the website of the council.

**3) Remote Access to Meetings**

a) The definition of meeting within the Council’s standing orders is amended so that

i) ‘place’ includes where a meeting is held, or to be held in more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers Sedgwick Parish Council will be offering remote video and audio and just audio access via the Zoom Platform.

ii) ‘open to the public’ includes access to the meeting by remote means including video conferencing.

iii) where a meeting is accessible to the public through remote means, the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.

b) If the Council becomes aware that the its technology has failed, and the meeting is no longer accessible to the public, the meeting shall be adjourned.

c) If public access cannot be restored within a 5 minute period, the remaining business shall be deferred to a future meeting.

**4) Councillors in Remote Attendance**

a) A councillor in remote attendance is present and counted for the purposes of the quorum when they can hear and where practicable see other members of the council and members of the public wishing to participate during the public session of the meeting or as invited by the Chairman

b) A councillor in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance at 4 a) are not met.

c) Subject to 4 b) the Chairman may if appropriate adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established or count the number of councillors in attendance for the purpose of the quorum

**5) Remote attendance by members of the public**

a) A member of the public is in remote attendance when they can hear and where practicable see and so be heard and where practicable seen by members of the council and other members of the public at the meeting

b) A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance at 5 a) are not met.

c) Subject to 5 b) the Chairman may if appropriate adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be reestablished or to vary the order of the agenda or complete the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.

**6) Remote Voting**

The Chair will take the vote by a roll call and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining will be recorded.

**7) Declarations of interest/Dispensation requests and Code of Conduct**

**Councillors excluded from the meeting**

Where a councillor is required to leave the room as a requirement of a declaration of interest or the Council’s code of conduct, the means of remote attendance and access will be severed whilst any discussion or vote take place.

**8) Exclusion of the press and public**

Where the council has resolved to exclude the press and public from any part of the meeting, due to the confidentiality of the business to be discussed then : a) The means of remote attendance and access to the meeting by members of the press and public will be severed b) Each councillor present shall declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (hearing or seeing), and/or recording the meeting.

This policy has been developed using guidance from NALC and Westhill Parish Council.