

## **Guidance on remote meetings**

### **System for conducting remote meetings**

1. Camden will conduct remote meetings using Microsoft Teams ('Teams') using the calls functionality.
2. The remote meeting will be conducted via a Teams call, using both the audio and video functionality so all participants<sup>1</sup> in a remote meeting should be capable of being heard and seen. All decision-makers must maintain as a legal minimum an audio connection to the meeting, but may mute themselves when they are not speaking. It will not impact the lawfulness or otherwise of the meeting should a committee member not be able to see the other participants for any part of the meeting, nor if they be cannot be seen by other participants and / or the public. All participants will, as far as able, try to join the meeting using the Teams app or web browser and not via dialling into the meeting.
3. Unless a meeting is dealing with confidential items, it will be streamed to the public so that they may listen and watch (should video be available) but the public will not be able to participate unless section B6 below applies; these are meetings held in public via a digital connection, but are not public meetings.
4. The Chair may be provided with advice on procedure and meeting management by a committee officer, a lawyer and other relevant officers.
5. Meetings will be streamed live as well as recorded, stored and uploaded to the Council's website. The Council will aim to do this within 48 hours of the meeting finishing.
6. Minutes will be taken and published in the usual manner.

### **Prior to the meeting**

1. Agendas will be published on the [website](#) and via the modern.gov app in advance of the meeting. Committee members will, as usual, receive an automated email when the agenda is published online containing a link to the agenda. They will also be provided with contact details to use in the event that their connection to the meeting is cut.

### **At the meeting**

1. The committee officer will begin the remote meeting 15 minutes before the meeting start time to allow participants to join promptly and check their audio / video feeds are working.
2. At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair will confirm attendance by calling the name of each of those expected to be in attendance and ask them to confirm that they are present, their role (voting member, guest member, advising officer or member of the public with speaking rights) and that they can hear proceedings. Any members who are acting as substitutes shall identify themselves as substitutes and say for whom they are substituting.
3. The meeting will, as the first item of business on the agenda, note and agree the variations / interpretations of procedure rules as set out in this document. The meeting will then follow the published agenda as normal.

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<sup>1</sup> Participants are defined as members of the committee; others who seek to address the committee; officers advising the committee or presenting reports; any external partners / third-parties invited to address or advise the Committee; and any member of the public with speaking rights.

4. Any Member participating who declares an interest in any item of business which would normally require them to leave the room shall switch off their microphone and camera for the duration of the item so they cannot be heard or seen by the other participants. They should also refrain from sending any messages using the chat function during the item or do anything that may be reasonably perceived as trying to influence the debate. The relevant Member will still be able to see and hear the discussion and at the end of the item may switch their camera and microphone back on. The committee officer may use their ability to remotely switch microphones on and off to assist in this process.

#### Debate

5. Committee members will indicate their desire to speak by submitting their name using the “chat” function on Teams. This “chat” will not be minuted nor be a formal part or contribution to the meeting. All participants should refrain from using the chat for any function other than indicating their wish to speak or indicating a loss of their audio feed and will be reminded about this at the outset of the meeting. Where a committee member has joined through dialling in, and therefore does not have access to the chat function, the Chair will at relevant points during items specifically invite those participants dialling-in to address the meeting or otherwise confirm they have no comments / questions.
6. When not speaking, participants will be asked to keep themselves muted. Officers may do this remotely to improve the audio quality of the meeting.

#### Interruptions to connections

7. If a Member’s audio feed cuts out during the meeting they will:
  - If still connected to Teams, use the ‘chat’ function to advise immediately that they can no longer hear the other participants;
  - If they are unable to use the Teams ‘chat’ function, use the emergency contact details provided to alert the relevant officer (usually the committee officer) who will advise the Chair.
8. Where the Chair is notified of a committee member’s audio feed failing they will immediately stop the meeting and call a short adjournment of up to 15 minutes to re-establish the connection. Where the connection is re-established, the Chair will ask relevant participants to repeat in summary any part of the discussion that is considered reasonably necessary to ensure committee members have been given the same information as each other.
9. If after the 15 minutes adjournment, the connection to the committee member cannot be re-established then the meeting will resume – so long as there is still a quorum (if applicable) – and the Member will be deemed as having left the meeting and will be unable to vote on the item. They may, if able, rejoin the meeting and participate on later items.
10. If the Chair is the member affected by the interrupted connection, the committee officer will adjourn the meeting. Upon the resumption, if the Chair has been unable to rejoin the meeting, the Vice-Chair will assume the Chair. Where there is no Vice-Chair, the committee officer will conduct a vote for a committee member to temporarily assume the chair. The usual Chair may resume their role at the start of the next item if they have resumed their connection.

11. Where the Chair is advised that the public audio feed is not working to a satisfactory standard, then they shall adjourn the meeting.

#### Voting

12. The Chair may, at their discretion, consider that there is an accord amongst committee members, and shall announce this to the meeting and not call for a formal vote. Should a committee member wish a formal vote to take place they should indicate this by way of the 'chat' function.
13. When the Chair elects to put a matter to the vote, they will ask the voting members of the committee to confirm that they were able to hear the item in full and to cast their vote on the recommendation(s) / motion. The chair will conduct a roll call in alphabetical order for each committee member to respond in turn.

#### Behaviour

14. The Chair will at their discretion be entitled to mute any contributors, including voting members, should they consider it appropriate. Should either a member or other participant become disruptive, the Chair will warn them and should that warning not result in a change of behaviour which is acceptable to the Chair then they shall, at their absolute discretion, be entitled to terminate the individual's participation in the meeting.

#### **Equalities**

1. It is recognised that that some persons who ordinarily would be able to participate in meetings in person will not be able to participate in remote meetings due to physical or other disability or because they lack the technological capability to do so. It is believed that this will only be a small minority of persons, but will likely disproportionately affect older persons and those of less financial means. We are aware that in terms of income those that fall within certain protected groups are statistically more likely to lack the means to have access to that equipment or the ability to use it. There is therefore functionality to dial into a meeting instead of joining via the Internet, and the Council will support this as far as possible in line with the procedures set out above.
2. Teams has live captions functionality for remote meetings for the deaf / hard of hearing, which participants can independently turn on; guidance on how to do so will be provided. The Council cannot accept any liability for the accuracy of these live captions.
3. The Council will consider any other requests for reasonable adjustments to be made in order to allow parties to be involved in remote Council meetings as far as circumstances at the time of the meeting allows.
4. In addition the Council will review and monitor the operation of its remote decision making and make adjustments when it considers it can further mitigate any adverse impact.

**ENDS**