

Guidance notes for the meeting

1. Council Public Meetings

The former regulations that enabled virtual committee meetings ended on 7 May 2021. Since then, all committee meetings need to return to face-to-face meetings. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. However due to the current COVID restrictions and social distancing measures only a small number of people can attend as meeting room capacities are limited.

Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually. Anybody attending the meeting in person will be asked to adhere to the current Government guidance and Council procedures in place to safely work during COVID 19. These include limiting numbers in a venue, maintaining social distancing, using hand sanitisers, wiping down areas that you have used, wearing face coverings when not sitting at a table (unless exempt from doing so) and following one-way signs in the venue/building. You will also be asked to sign in via the NHS Test and Trace app or to sign an attendance record and will be asked relevant questions before admittance to the meeting. Everyone attending the meeting will be asked to undertake a lateral flow test up to 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Please contact the Committee Administrator or Democratic Services on 01823 357628 or email democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk if you have any questions or concerns.

2. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 07790577336/ 07811 313837/ 07790577232

They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers.

Printed copies will not be available for inspection at the Council's offices and this requirement was removed by the Regulations.

3. Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a

councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 07790577336/ 07811 313837/ 07790577232.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 30 minutes in total.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chair may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public

interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

6. **Meeting Etiquette**

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, remove the participant from the meeting.

8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting. As a matter of courtesy to the public, anyone wishing to film or record proceedings is asked to provide reasonable notice to the

Committee Administrator so that the relevant Chair can inform those present at the start of the meeting.

We would ask that, as far as possible, members of the public aren't filmed unless they are playing an active role such as speaking within a meeting and there may be occasions when speaking members of the public request not to be filmed.

A copy of the Council's Recording of Meetings Protocol is available from the Committee Administrator for the meeting.