



Meeting Face-to-Face

Introduction

Following the expiration of the The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 on 6 May 2021, Leek Wootton & Guy's Cliffe Parish Council will return to face-to-face meetings from 1 June 2021.

According to advice received from the National Association of Local Councils [NALC] (see Appendix A) and Society of Local Council Clerks [SLCC] (see Appendix B), Leek Wootton & Guy's Cliffe Parish Council has completed a Risk Assessment for the return to face-to-face meetings, the following measures have been put in place.

Ordinary Parish Council Meeting, 1 June 2021

All attendees are required to:

- Check-in to the venue on arrival using the NHS COVID-19 app
- Wash hands and/or use hand sanitiser on arrival
- Wear masks unless seated
- Maintain social distancing of 2m
- Ensure to provide own equipment, e.g. pens and paper

The Meeting

In order to ensure that legal restrictions are complied with, the Clerk will need to know how many people will be attending.

The room will be laid out to comply with social distancing guidelines.

Attendance

Meetings should only be attended by those who need to attend.

Whilst Parish Council meetings are open to the public, members of the public are asked to consider whether their attendance is necessary, or can it wait until the meeting on 6 July 2021 (when restrictions should have been further lifted)?

If a member of the public needs to attend, please contact the Clerk, who will provide details and requirements for attending and, if the meeting has to be cancelled for any reason, can let everyone know.

The Clerk will also require contact details of all attendees

Appendix A: NALC Advice

- From May 2021, as face-to-face council meetings resume there will still be the risk to attendees of COVID-19 exposure. Councils should conduct a risk assessment in advance of a face-to-face meeting which should give consideration to what the council can do to reduce risk to councillors, staff and public including:
- Providing hand sanitiser to those entering the meeting room and making sure hand sanitiser is readily available in the room itself
- Staggering arrival and exit times for staff, councillors and members of the public
- Placing seating at least 2-metres apart
- Ensuring everyone wears face masks
- Holding paperless meetings
- If papers are provided, people should be discouraged from sharing with others and asked to take the papers with them at the end of the meeting to minimise how many people handle the papers
- Arranging seating so people are not facing each other directly
- Choosing a venue with good ventilation, including opening windows and doors where possible
- Choosing a large enough venue to allow distancing – this may mean choosing a different venue to what the council used before.
- The council (or venue owner/operator) will need to identify the venue's maximum capacity in their risk assessment, taking into account the need for social distancing. Consider how the council will ensure this capacity is not exceeded and how it will manage the situation if more people wish to attend than capacity allows. For example, could meetings be live-streamed or could members of the public submit questions via email?
- If the venue has an NHS QR code to support test and trace then all attendees should register using that app, for those without access to the app they should register attendance in line with the venue's test and trace procedure. NB all venues in hospitality, the tourism and leisure industry, close contact services, community centres and village halls must have a [test and trace procedure](#)
- Venues must conform with the government guidance for [multi-purpose community facilities](#) and for [council buildings](#). If the venue is run by the council then the council must take responsibility for this, otherwise, the council can ask the venue to provide confirmation that they do conform to this guidance
- The council must understand and ensure it is acting in compliance with the latest government [safer workplaces guidance](#)

Appendix B: Advice received via SLCC Forum

1. Your Council meeting (Councillors, staff and any others who are there as part of the formal business of the meeting) is an exception to the gatherings restrictions (because it is a gathering for work, community or voluntary purposes) and so is not bound by the rules of 6 or 30. The specific legal citation should you need it is s3 (4(a)), Part 1, Schedule 3 of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/364/schedule/3> ;
2. members of the public may attend the Council meeting indoors in any number limited only by your venue's COVID capacity. This is because the gathering of the public to observe your meeting is a 'permitted organised gathering' as defined by the regulations thus: 'A gathering is a permitted organised gathering...if it takes place on or at premises, other than a private dwelling, which are (a) operated by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body, or (b) part of premises used for the operation of a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body.' The specific legal citation should you need it is s5(2), Part 1, of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/364/regulation/5>
3. So, your Councillors and staff can meet indoors with no restrictions on numbers other than your COVID risk-assessment of your venue, as a Council meeting is explicitly exempt from the current COVID gatherings restrictions. The public can attend the meeting with no COVID gatherings restrictions on numbers, other than your own COVID risk-assessed calculation of the safe capacity of your venue as it is a 'permitted organised gathering' under the COVID regulations.
4. If you are still not convinced, I'd refer you to the most recent Government guidance on the matter which clearly shows their views that indoor Council meetings are similar to other permitted indoor events such as concerts, sports events, etc: This includes activities which are likely to have comparable health risks to local authority meetings, for example allowing up to 1,000 people to attend performances or sporting events in indoor venues, or up to half-capacity (whichever is lower). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-councilbuildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings>
5. In summary, your decisions on local indoor meetings should be focussed on your risk-assessment of your venue and the numbers you can safely fit in there, you do not need to worry about being caught out by the 6/30 whatever rules as they do not apply to a Council meeting. If your usual venue can't safely hold your Council meeting then you are perfectly at liberty to use another venue inside or outside of your parish, or hold you meeting outside if you want to. But you must do a risk-assessment and able to show that your numbers are based on your decisions on safe numbers derived from your risk assessment, whether it is an inside or outside meeting.