

## **VIRTUAL COMMITTEE PROCEDURE RULES**

### **1. SCOPE OF THESE RULES**

- 1.1. These Rules apply to all Committee and Sub-Committee meetings of the Council including Full Council, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Panels and Licensing Sub-Committees and must be read in conjunction with the General Committee Procedure Rules.

### **2. VIRTUAL COMMITTEES**

- 2.1. All Council meetings will be held virtually until such time as it is deemed safe by the Government to hold public events. From this time Committees can be run partly in physical form (held in a Committee room or specific venue) and partly virtually. If any part of a meeting is held virtually then the Virtual Committee Procedure Rules shall apply.
- 2.2. All virtual meetings will be held via Microsoft Teams and broadcast via the Council website so members of the public and the press can view the meeting.
- 2.3. The link for the meeting will appear on the agenda page on the website at least 24 hours before the commencement of the meeting.
- 2.4. All virtual meetings will be run using live video conferencing/streaming, where possible.
- 2.5. Agendas for Committee meetings will be published via the Council website in line with normal procedure.
- 2.6. At the commencement of each meeting the Chair will ask each Committee member (in turn alphabetically) whether they are in attendance followed by confirmation of the officers present for the meeting. This is to ensure that communication between the Chair and their Committee/officers is working correctly. This check will also ensure that the meeting is quorate.
- 2.7. Only those Councillors who are members of the Committee taking place will be entitled to join the meeting, and any non-Committee members must view the meeting through the public feed. The only exceptions to this will be when a non-Committee member is presenting a report (such as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission presenting the Commission's comments at the Cabinet) or when the Councillor is the Opposition Group's representative (normally the Leader of the Opposition) 'attending' a meeting of the Cabinet.

### **3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

#### **Public Question Time (PQT)**

- 3.1. There will **no** PQT at any Council meeting while virtual Committee meetings are being held. This includes all Committees, Scrutiny Panels, Sub-Committees, Cabinet and Full Council.
- 3.2. Public questions to Committees can instead be submitted in writing by **noon two days\*** in advance of the meeting by emailing [democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk)

with the exception of the Full Council where the questions must be submitted by **noon one week\*\*** before the meeting.

- 3.3. All accepted public questions will be published within a supplementary agenda.
- 3.4. At the meeting itself the written public questions will be read out during the allocated time and will be followed by a response.
- 3.5. There will be no supplementary questions at any Committee.
- 3.6. The questioner will receive an emailed copy of the response given at the meeting.
- 3.7. There are to be no written public questions allowed for Planning Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee and Scrutiny Panel meetings.

### **Rules Governing Written Public Questions**

- 3.8. For any written question received, the Monitoring Officer shall have the final say as to whether a question meets the following criteria.
- 3.9. For ordinary meetings of the **Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Audit Committee, Governance Committee and Licensing Committee** the following rules apply to the written question:
  - a) The question must be received by at least **noon two days\*** before the scheduled start of the meeting.
  - b) The question should be relevant to any item on the agenda.
  - c) The question must not relate to an individual case which should be dealt with under the Council's Complaints Procedure or any other formal appeals procedure.
  - d) The question must not be, in essence, the same as a question which has been put to that Committee in the past 6 months.
  - e) The question must not be more than 100 words long.
  - f) The Chair of the Committee, at their discretion, may answer the question or invite other Councillors or officers to respond.
- 3.10. For the **Cabinet** the following rules apply to the written question:
  - a) The question must be received by at least **noon two days\*** before the scheduled start of the meeting.
  - b) The question should be relevant to the functions of the Cabinet.
  - c) The question must not relate to an individual case which should be dealt with under the Council's Complaints Procedure or any other formal appeals procedure.
  - d) The question must not be, in essence, the same as a question which has been put to the Cabinet in the past 6 months.
  - e) The question must not be more than 100 words long.
  - f) The Leader may answer the question or invite the most relevant Cabinet Member(s) or an officer present to respond.

*\*NB: For the purposes of clarity, "noon two days before the meeting" would mean where the meeting is to be held on a Wednesday, the question must be received by*

*noon on Monday of the week of the meeting or where the meeting is to be held on a Monday then it must be received by noon on Saturday of the previous week.*

3.11. For **Full Council** the following rules apply to the written question, based on the *Public Written Questions* section set out in the current *Full Council Procedure Rules*:

- a) **Who May Be Asked A Question:** A question will normally only be put to either:
  - The Mayor.
  - A Cabinet Member.
  - The Chair of any Committee.
- b) **How To Submit A Question:** Questions will be emailed to [democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk). Questions should be received by **noon one week\*\*** before the meeting.
- c) **Publication Of Responses:** The written questions and answers will be published in advance of the meeting via a Supplementary Agenda on the Council's website.
- d) **Scope Of Questions:** The Head of Legal, Democracy and HR may reject a question if, in their opinion, it:
  - Is a statement and not a question.
  - Does not relate to an issue for which the Council holds responsibility, or which specifically affects the Borough.
  - Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive.
  - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information or relates directly to an individual's personal circumstances.
  - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put to a meeting of the Council in the past 6 months.
  - Relates to a specific planning or licensing application.
  - In the case of a written question, it has not been submitted before the defined deadline or is more than 100 words long.

*\*\*NB: In normal circumstances, where the meeting is to be held on a Wednesday, then it must be received by noon on Wednesday of the previous week.*

#### **4. PUBLIC SPEAKING RIGHTS**

- 4.1. There are **no** public speaking rights at Committees or Sub-Committees (including Planning Committee and Scrutiny Panels) with the exception of the Licensing Sub-Committee or at a meeting of the Cabinet in respect of a presentation of a petition by the principal petitioner.

##### **Planning Committee**

- 4.2. There will be no right to speak at a virtually held Planning Committee meeting. Instead the applicant, anyone who has submitted a valid written representation on an application, the local Ward Borough Councillors, or any other elected individual (as defined in the Speaking at Planning Committee Procedure Rules (SPCPR)) has the ability to submit a further statement for consideration by the Planning Committee.
- 4.3. This further statement replaces the ability to address the Committee during consideration of the application as detailed in the SPCPR.

- 4.4. People wishing to submit a statement must have emailed their document to [democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@crawley.gov.uk) no later than **noon two days\*** before the Committee meeting.
- 4.5. The document, which must be in either a Microsoft Word or PDF format, may contain images, and must be no more than 1½ A4 sheets of text and a further 1½ sheets of A4 images. Presentations will not be accepted. These representations will be read out at the Planning Committee meeting and will be allocated 3 minutes per statement. Any statement which is too long will not be read out in full.
- 4.6. To try to align with the current SPCPR a limited number of statements will be accepted per application and they will be accepted on a first come, first served basis:
- 3x Objectors (including Objectors on behalf of a group)
  - 3x Applicant, Agent or Supporters, including relevant Cabinet Member/s
  - Ward Borough Councillors
  - Any other elected individual.
- 4.7. The order in which the statements will be published and then presented to the Committee will be the same order as set out in Paragraph 6 (Order of Speaking and Time Allocation) of the SPCPR.

*\*NB: For the purposes of clarity, “noon two days\* before the meeting” would mean where the meeting is to be held on a Wednesday, then it must be received by noon on Monday of the week of the meeting or where the meeting is to be held on a Monday then it must be received by noon on Saturday of the previous week.*

## **5. VOTING**

- 5.1. For any Committee held virtually, all voting will be held via a recorded vote. The exceptions are for approving the minutes from the previous meeting or any other procedural item which is moved by the Chair.

## **6. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

- 6.1. Members of the public and press may only be excluded either in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules or Rule 17 (Disturbance by Public) of the Full Council Procedure Rules/General Committee Procedure Rules. For virtual meetings, this means the public stream will be ended for the general public and press.

## **7. COUNCILLORS' CONDUCT AT VIRTUAL MEETINGS**

The general requirements of the Code of Conduct for Councillors still apply, however when a meeting is conducted virtually, particular attention should be paid to the following:

### **7.1. Every Councillor present at the meeting shall:**

- a) Treat others with courtesy and respect.
- b) Conduct themselves in a way which does not cause offence to others or limits in any way others' ability to participate at the meeting.

- c) Only speak when called on by the Chair or speak through the Chair (during virtual meetings, the camera will show anyone who is speaking).
- d) Be mindful of the background and surroundings of their video stream as it will be shown throughout the duration of the meeting.
- e) Ensure that during the meeting there are no disturbances.
- f) Log on to a meeting individually and not share a screen.
- g) Warn either the Chair or the Democratic Services team member supporting the meeting if they need to leave the meeting, want to raise a procedural motion or are having technical difficulties.

7.2. **Chair Speaking:** When the Chair speaks during a debate, any Councillor speaking at the time must stop. The meeting must be silent.

7.3. **Only One Councillor Shall Speak At A Time:** At virtual meetings, the Chair will invite each Councillor in turn to speak, normally in alphabetical order. A Councillor when speaking shall address the Chair. While a Councillor is speaking other Councillors shall remain quiet, normally being muted unless raising a procedural motion or making a personal explanation.

## 8. **RECORDING AND RETENTION OF THE MEETING**

8.1. The Council will only be live streaming Committees at present and will not retain a copy of meetings online.

## 9. **ADVANCEMENT OF THE VIRTUAL COMMITTEE PROCEDURE RULES**

9.1. There is an expectation that the above Procedures Rules will evolve as technology adapts and as the Council becomes more experienced at holding virtual meetings. This may, and is likely to, include allowing virtual public questions at meetings, representations by the public at Planning Committees, non-Committee members using the Committee feed and introducing approaches to enable Committee Members to vote and indicate their wish to speak on an item.

9.2. The Chief Executive and / or Head of Democracy, Legal and HR has the delegation to amend these Procedures Rules in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governance Committee and the Leader of the Council, as and when practicable to ensure that the Council's Virtual Committees can run as efficiently as possible and mirror, where possibly, a standard committee.