REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL
Using Microsoft Teams

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations permit remote attendance in Local Authority meetings.

Remote attendance is permitted as long as certain conditions are satisfied. These include that the Member is able to hear and be heard by the other Members in attendance. Also, being able to hear and be heard by any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting (in line with the public participation scheme). A visual solution is preferred, but audio is sufficient.

This also related to members of the public attending the meeting also being heard.

The regulations are clear that a meeting is not limited to those present in the same place, but includes electronic, digital or virtual locations (internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers).

2.   MICROSOFT TEAMS

Teams is the system recommended for hosting remote / virtual meetings. It has functionality for audio, video and screen sharing and you do not need to be a member of an organisation (or have a Teams account) to join a Teams meeting.

3.   ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

The Peninsula Transport Secretariat (Devon County Council) will publish the agenda and reports for committee meetings on the Council's website and will notify Members by email in line with usual practice.

If a Board Member wishes to have a paper copy, they must notify the Secretariat before the agenda is published, so they can arrange to post direct.

4.   SETTING UP THE MEETING

This will be done by the Secretariat. They will send a meeting request via Microsoft Teams and will also appear in Outlook calendars. This effectively enables them to be the 'organiser' and gives them slightly more functionality than other participants. This will be used to support the Chair of the meeting.

Meetings will be held at the time notified in the agenda with participants able to attend via internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

5.   INCLUDING EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS

External users can use the Teams app by downloading it to their laptop, smartphone or tablet.

External participants can be sent the meeting request via email and if a participant is included in this way, they can use all the functions of Teams (video / chat) in the meeting. This might be useful for external presenters.

Alternatively, someone can be added to a meeting as a voice call. This can be done at the appropriate time in the meeting by the Secretariat (ensuring the international dialling code is included when dialling).

There is also provision for a conference call number and ID to be given to external people who are calling in, which is another mechanism for them to join the meeting. Again, this will be done by the Secretariat as part of the meeting administration.

6.   JOINING THE MEETING

Attendees are encouraged to join the meeting promptly (i.e. at least three minutes before the scheduled start time) in order to avoid disrupting the meeting.

Attendees should use the link within the calendar invite for the meeting which will say 'Join Microsoft Teams Meeting', which will open the Microsoft Teams app on the laptop/tablet automatically.

7.   STARTING THE MEETING

At the start of the meeting, the Secretariat will check all required attendees are present (viewing the participant list).

The Secretariat will also have details of any members of the public attending and / or press. The public and press will be notified via the meeting information on the website that they will need to contact the Secretariat to obtain the link or code for the meeting.

The Secretariat will start the meeting with a short briefing on meeting etiquette (the meeting agenda will reflect this). They will 'share their screen' with a pictorial presentation of microphone and video icons to demonstrate the relevant controls. This briefing will include asking Members and Officers to **turn off all unnecessary microphones**, unless they are speaking. This prevents background noise, coughing etc which is intrusive and disruptive during the meeting. The Secretariat will also keep a watch on this and will be able to turn off participant mics when they are not in use. The Chair can do this, but the Secretariat will fulfill this function. Members would then need to turn their microphones back on when they wish to speak.

The Secretariat (as part of this briefing) will also ask all participants to **turn off all unnecessary video**. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to turn off the video (unless you are the Chair or speaking). This helps with call quality and avoids anyone being filmed/recorded without realising. The Chair should keep their video on at all times. There is no facility for the Secretariat to

turn off other participants video (like you can with microphones) or even see who has their video turned on, so it is even more important that participants are aware of this.

8. QUORUM

The number of Members required to be present for a quorum for a meeting shall be as set out in the Constitution. However, for the purposes of determining whether a quorum of Members is present at a meeting, the Chair shall include all those Members in remote attendance.

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Participation by members of the public will continue in line with the Board's public participation scheme http://www.peninsulatransport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Public-Participation-Scheme.pdf

Members of the public can listen to or observe the proceedings of a committee. They are asked to contact the Secretariat so they can be sent the link direct into the meeting or be dialled in at the appropriate time.

Both they and the Secretariat will need to ensure their microphone is enabled so the meeting can hear them. If they have video capability on their laptop / device, then they should turn this on so the Committee can see them.

It must be switched off again after they have made their statement.

As stated earlier, for those who do not have access to the internet / Teams, the Secretariat can dial the member of the public into the meeting using either a mobile or a landline phone number.

In the absence of either access to a PC, Mobile or landline, Members of the public can participate in those meetings where they would have made verbal representations by submitting their representation in writing. Those submissions, petitions or questions can then be read out by the Chair or Secretariat.

The Secretariat will mute the member of the public once they have spoken.

10. THE MEETING AND DEBATE

For Members and co-opted members of the Board who wish to speak in the debate, they should click on the meeting chat facility and simply write their name or use the 'raised hand' function on the toolbar which allows participants to virtually 'raise a hand' i.e. signalling that they wish to speak. The Chair will then be aware you wish to speak and can take the requests in the appropriate order.

It is important that the chat function is used solely for this purpose or to raise a point of order, otherwise it is very distracting if other questions / conversations are happening within the chat, simultaneous to the meeting.

When referring to reports or making specific comments, Members should refer to the report and page number so that all Members have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

If the debate appears to be coming to an end, the Chair may ask if any other Member wishes to speak before concluding the debate.

When you speak, remember to switch on your mic and video, refer to any relevant page numbers and speak clearly.

11. MEETING ETIQUETTE REMINDER

- Behave like you would do in a formal meeting setting
- Do not have members of your household in the same room as you
- Any video feed should show a non-descript background e.g. using the 'blur' function
- 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
- The only person on video will be the Chair and the one other person speaking

12. VOTING

The chat function can be used to ask the Board to take a vote. When it comes to taking the vote, the Secretariat will type in the chat: "All those in favour". Those entitled to vote in the meeting should type 'yes' (in favour of the Motion), 'no' (against the Motion) or 'abstain'.

If the Chair does not wish to use the chat function, they will ask each Member to vote in turn. Members should express their vote verbally once asked and the Secretariat will record the outcome of votes and announce these to the meeting.

Details of how Members voted will not be minuted unless a Recorded Vote is called for (and agreed).

13. PART 2 REPORTS AND DEBATE

There are times when meetings are not open to the public, when confidential or "exempt" issues – as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – are under consideration. It is important to ensure that there are no members of the public at remote locations able to hear or see the proceedings during such meetings.

It would be good practice to turn off smart speakers such as Amazon Echo (Alexa), Google Home and smart music devices. These could inadvertently record phone or video conversations, which would not be appropriate during the consideration of confidential items.

If the agenda comprises of both public items and part 2, the Secretariat will set up a separate meeting to consider the part 2 item, so there is no danger of a previous participant inadvertently re-joining the meeting.

As the meeting moves into Part 2, the Chair should ask each Member in remote attendance to ensure and verbally declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (either hearing or seeing) consideration of such items, and/or recording the proceedings.

14. DISTURBANCE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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 will ask the Secretariat to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

15. AFTER THE MEETING

Please ensure you leave the meeting by clicking on the red phone button to hangup. The Secretariat can also end the meeting and will do so, if participants fail to leave the meeting properly.

16. TECHNICAL ISSUES

In the event that the Chair or Secretariat identifies a failure of the remote participation facility, the Chair should declare a recess while the fault is addressed.

If it is not possiblle to address the fault and the meeting becomes inquorate through this fault, the meeting will be abandoned until such time as it can be reconvened. If the meeting is quorate, then it should continue.

Those attending remotely would be aware and accept that the meeting would continue and a vote would be taken without their attendance.

If the Chair is made aware that the meeting is not accessible to the public through remote means, due to any technological or other failure of provision, then the Chair shall adjourn the meeting. If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period, then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair.

17. EQUALITY

It is important for authorities to ensure that the needs of any Members with a disability are taken into account when considering the practicality of a remotely attended meeting, taking any reasonable adjustments into account.