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## ST DOMINIC PARISH COUNCIL

### Policy for dealing with Council Business during the Coronavirus Outbreak

#### National Legislation

Since March 2020, legislation has been in place to ensure that Parish Councils can carry on their business without holding meetings, with authority delegated to the Chairman, the Vice Chairman and the Clerk to make decisions on the ordinary business of the Council.

However further legislation, including the Covid-19 May 2021 Act, has been put in place to permit the holding of meetings, using either phone conferencing or other virtual technology (eg Teams or Zoom)

Note no legislation has been put in place to repeal the "Six Month Councillor Attendance" rule (Local Government Act 1972 Section 85).

#### Meetings and Risk Assessment

The Parish Council may hold meetings during the Coronavirus Crisis. The format of these meetings (either physical or virtual) is to be decided according to the COVID 19 Regulations at the time of calling a meeting, or, if circumstances change, before the summons is issued and Public Notices displayed.

A risk assessment will be carried out by the clerk, prior to any meeting, in consultation with the chair and vice chair, using NALC/CALC guidelines, taking regard of the following criteria

- i) What is the reason for meeting? Can the democratic process be better served using other formats, if Covid issues exist or impact?
- ii) What is the Risk Level at the time? What Tiers of Risk is in force in the immediate and neighbouring areas?
- iii) Is a physical meeting justified at the time, or can it be addressed in other formats – why cannot it be done by another means?
- iv) If it is possible that more than six people will attend, can social distancing guidelines be maintained? How will the members of the Public be accommodated within current social distancing guidelines?
- v) Has the Parish Council undertaken a Covid-19 risk assessment, prior to any meeting, and been able to mitigate all risks?
- vi) If a physical meeting is held, will all those attending be able to hear the debate and discussion and participate in the meeting wearing face masks? (Note that visors are not permissible – the face covering must fit firmly against the face, covering the nose and mouth at all times).
- vii) Is it reasonable to expect members of the council, its staff and members of the public to attend the meeting in an indoor space, with regard to guidelines and legislation in force at that time?

#### Scheme of Delegation

In order to maintain the democratic process, if the Parish Council is unable to meet physically or virtually, all papers will be circulated by email (or Royal Mail if necessary) to every member for input, which will be disseminated by the Clerk and signed off by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. Decisions will be signed off/ratified at the first available Full Council Meeting.

#### Planning

Planning applications will be discussed at either a physical or virtual meeting, with extra meetings called between scheduled meetings if required.

In the event that neither a physical or virtual meeting can be held, planning applications will be circulated to the Members of the Council who shall let the Clerk have any comments within a week. The applications will also be displayed on the website, with a link to the Cornwall Council Planning Portal, and public comment will be invited, also within one week. The Clerk will then draft a reply to Cornwall Council, which shall be approved by the Chairman and Vice Chairman as the considered response from the Parish Council and members of the public. \*[www.stdominicpc.org.uk](http://www.stdominicpc.org.uk)

### **Finance**

In the event that neither a physical or virtual meeting can be held, payments to be made shall be sent as a schedule from the Clerk to the Members for approval. Once approved cheques will be raised for these payments and two signatories will sign them, until the proposed online banking system is put in place. These payments will be ratified at the first available full Council meeting. Bank reconciliations will continue to be produced monthly and circulated to the Members with a Finance Report.

### **Contracts**

All existing contracts will be extended for a further year without the need to tender as this is not practicable in the present climate. (Advice from CALC)

### **Statutory Functions**

Statutory dates and functions, e.g. the Annual Parish Council Meeting, may change and the Parish Council will act in accordance with Government guidelines as and when published. At the time of this document the Annual Parish Meeting will be postponed indefinitely.

All details will be published on the Parish Council website as they are received: [www.stdominicpc.org.uk](http://www.stdominicpc.org.uk)

The Clerk undertakes to maintain the Parish Council website with as much information for the public as is necessary.

The Clerk will review this policy as required, and the Parish Council will consider and adopt the revisions as appropriate

Any Risk Assessments made as a result of this Policy will be displayed on the Parish Council website, and on display at any physical meeting.

**Revised by Jim Candy, Clerk, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020**  
**Adopted by St Dominic Parish Council 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020**