

Guidance on council meetings

National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face-to-face contact.

Local councils have the powers to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021 and so most councils will have no need to meet in person. Furthermore, local councils have the duty to allow the public to observe council meetings without placing restrictions on the number attending, which many council meeting venues will not be able to accommodate in a safe way at this time.

The council is responsible for the health and safety of staff, councillors and others attending council meetings. The council must take care to check it is working to the most up-to-date government guidance and legislation.

Restrictions to social gatherings from 14 September 2020

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 were made on 13 September and came in to force on, 14 September, at 12.01. They amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020 ("the Principal Regulations"), so that people may not participate in social gatherings, in any place, in groups of more than six, unless they are members of the same household, two linked households or exceptions apply.

NALC's view is that although the Principal Regulations continue to permit local councils to hold meetings (now as an exemption to the six-person gatherings limit) in COVID-19 secure premises, the NALC position remains that we recommend that councils continue to meet remotely.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Guidance Updated 14th September 2020: We continue to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally without the need for face-to-face contact, they should continue to do so. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities#permitted-activities-in-multi-use-community-facilities-signposting-to-relevant-guidance>

If the council wishes to consider returning to face-to-face meetings, then there are a range of issues that will need to be addressed before this can take place. The following checklist will help a council ensure this decision is made in accordance with relevant regulations and requirements.

Further guidance related to COVID-19 can be found on the NALC and SLCC websites.

CHECKLIST FOR HOLDING AN IN-PERSON COUNCIL MEETING

	Item	Confirmed
1	There is no way for the council to conduct business except through a face-to-face meeting.	
	<p>The council staff and councillors are unable to conduct business without a face-to-face meeting.</p> <p><i>Note: The <u>government rules</u> still state that we should all work from home if we can.</i></p>	<p>Not confirmed.</p> <p>KPC has held remote meetings since March</p>
	<p>The council is unable to make use of telephone or online technology to conduct quorate council meetings.</p> <p><i>Note: Local councils <u>have the powers</u> to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021. Parish meetings do not have such powers to meet remotely.</i></p>	<p>Not confirmed.</p> <p>Councillors and members of the public can access by phone</p>
	<p>The council has a reasonable business need, or legal need to meet in person at this time.</p> <p><i>Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 state that a public authority can only hold a gathering of over 30 people if certain conditions are met</i></p>	<p>Not confirmed.</p>
2	Action has been taken to seek a number of options for an appropriate venue for the council meeting.	
	<p>These venues comply with normal council meeting requirements.</p> <p><i>Note: NALC members can access <u>Legal Topic Note 5</u> – Parish and community council meetings.</i></p>	<p>Use of main hall</p>
	<p>The venues allow the public to observe council meetings with social distancing without placing restrictions on the number attending.</p>	<p>Restriction on number allowed in Memorial Hall</p>

	The venues conform with the government guidance for <u>multi-purpose community facilities</u> and for <u>council buildings</u> .	Kimpton Memorial Hall conforms to legislation and regulations
	If the venue is not owned/managed by the council the owners have been asked for their risk assessment and what actions they are taking to reduce risk.	KPC would be required to produce a COVID 19 risk assessment for Kimpton Memorial Hall Committee to review
3	There is a potential venue the council can use in compliance with the above requirements.	Kimpton Memorial Hall
4	The council understands and is acting in compliance with <u>'safer workplaces'</u> guidance.	TBC
5	The council has checked if there are councillors or staff that will be unable to attend face-to-face meetings due to health, disability or other reasons.	TBC
	The council has considered how it will make reasonable adjustments to allow individuals with disabilities or other needs to take part in the meeting.	
	The council has considered a <u>hybrid approach</u> to meetings.	
6	A <u>risk assessment</u> has been conducted.	To be undertaken
	Consideration has been taken towards what the council can do to reduce risk to councillors, staff and public including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing hand sanitiser to those entering the meeting room and making sure hand sanitiser is readily available in the room itself. • Staggering arrival times for staff, councillors and members of the public. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring seating is placed at least 2-metre apart.• Asking people to wear 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 air flow, including opening windows and doors where possible <p><i>Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 require that the person responsible for organising the gathering has carried out a risk assessment and the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission taking into account the risk assessment.</i></p>	
7	The council has decided, based on the risk assessment and with risk management actions that it is safe and appropriate to meet. Agreement to create and display a QR Code to allow NHS Test and Trace	TBC
8	All risk mitigating actions identified by the risk assessment have taken place.	

This checklist has been conducted to the council's satisfaction and it has been agreed/not agreed that the council will hold a face-to-face (or hybrid) meeting.

The council will re-evaluate this decision following the first council meeting held, and where necessary the risk assessment and risk management activities will be updated. Following this, the council will review this checklist [quarterly/after each council meeting/at times to be agreed by the council/delete as appropriate].

Date	
Signature	