

# Emberton Parish Council

## Addendum to Standing Orders

### **The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020**

#### **Background to the 2020 Regulations**

The COVID 19 pandemic and the unprecedented in peacetime government measures in response to the crisis (eg prohibitions on gatherings, social distancing, self-isolation of those deemed to be the most vulnerable) have meant that the requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person with all members present in one place cannot be met.

In recognition of the problem of holding and attending meetings, the Government included S78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020. This section gave the Secretary of State the power to make Regulations to provisions for the holding of meetings. The 2020 Regulation set out those provisions and applies to local authority meetings that are required to be held, or held, before 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**Regulation 4 (1) – meetings** – in respect of a reference in any enactment to a meeting of a local authority, that authority may, as they determine (a) hold such meetings and at such hour and on such days: and (b) alter the frequency, move or cancel such meetings, without requirement for further notice.

**Regulation 4 (2) – appointments** – where an appointment would otherwise be made or is required to be made at an annual meeting of a local authority, the appointment continues until the next annual meeting of the authority or until such time as that authority may determine. This would apply to the election of the chairman, the first business at the annual council meeting. Therefore the current chairman will remain in place until an annual meeting is held unless the council decide to elect a replacement earlier.

**Regulation 5 – place of meetings** - A reference in any enactment to a meeting of a local authority is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

For the purposes of any such enactment, a member of a local authority (a “member in remote attendance”) attends the meeting at any time if all of the conditions in the below subsection are satisfied.

Those conditions are that the member in remote attendance is able at that time (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance, (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

In this regulation any reference to a member, or a member of the public, attending a meeting includes that person attending by remote access.

**Regulation 5 (6) – voting** – Clauses 13 and 14 of the Standing Orders (May 2019) shall remain in force in that voting on every decision taken may be made by a show of hands or verbal confirmation. The Chairman shall have the casting or deciding vote.

**Regulation 5 (6) – public access to documents** – public access to documents will continue with Agendas and Minutes being published on the noticeboard and on the parish council’s website.

**Regulation 5 (6) – public access to meetings** – meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public’s exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public’s exclusion.

Should a member of the public so require, they will be permitted to speak remotely at parish council meetings subject to them making a prior request to the clerk in writing to speak.

Public speaking time will be limited to 15 minutes, 3 minutes per speaker

**Regulation 6** – confirms that being present at a local council meeting includes being present through remote attendance. There is no requirement for a parish council to hold its annual meeting although a council may do so if they so choose.