



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

# REMOTE PLANNING COMMITTEE PROTOCOL (May 2020)

## Introduction

1. The Welsh Government recently passed temporary emergency Regulations (the [Local Authorities \(Coronavirus\) \(Meetings\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) which came into effect on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020) which enable local planning authorities to reconvene planning committees by making temporary provision during the COVID-19 pandemic to relax some of the rules relating to the conduct of council business, so that important decisions can still be made during social distancing. This means that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (“the Council”) can now hold official meetings virtually, with members participating via video conferencing.
2. While Council meetings in general will only be held to discuss urgent and business critical issues until the pandemic subsides, the Planning Committee will meet on its usual 3-weekly cycle (or at a ‘special committee’ where appropriate) where applications are required to be determined by Members in accordance with the Council’s delegated arrangements.
3. During the current special circumstances, the style and tone of meetings will be very different from conventional physical meetings. Most importantly while Planning Committee will meet remotely, and may be attended by anyone who is registered to speak (see below), the meetings will NOT be ‘live-streamed’ for all to view and attend, but instead will be recorded and made available to view ‘as live’ following the meeting.
4. As will be expected, there may be technical issues or other difficulties encountered in adopting such new working practices in a challenging time, so the patience and respect of all those involved in the process is requested.

## Registering to Speak

5. Although operating remotely, the public still have a right to attend the meeting and address the Committee in accordance with the [Council’s approved procedure](#) (available via the Council’s website).
6. Please note that requests to address the Committee must be received no later than 2pm on the penultimate working day immediately preceding the associated Planning Committee. Based on the usual Tuesday meetings, this would require any representations to be submitted no later than 2pm on the Friday before Committee.

7. In the event that any additional members, Town/ Community Councils, applicants / agents or other persons wish to attend the meeting to participate in accordance with the Council’s public speaking protocol, a link will be forwarded by Democratic Services to attend. Access to the meeting will only be possible via this link, which should only be used by the person registered to speak (i.e. not forwarded to others).

### **Technical Requirements**

8. The Council will be using [Microsoft TEAMS](#) in order to facilitate this meeting. Access to TEAMS is available via any laptop / PC, tablet or smart phone. While technical support to facilitate such access is not available via the Council and should be sought individually, please contact our democratic services team should you have concerns about your ability to speak at the meeting.

### **Procedural Rules**

9. The procedural rules for Planning Committee meetings are attached at Appendix 1 of this guidance note (these differing slightly from the Council’s procedural rules due to the need to incorporate public speaking).

### **Helpful Tips for Registered Speakers**

10. As the meeting will be recorded and available to the public via the Council’s website ([www.npt.gov.uk](http://www.npt.gov.uk)) after conclusion of the meeting, participation in any Planning Committee meeting is deemed to be consent to such recording.
11. Please ensure you are in a quiet place. Even if you can mute your equipment, while you are speaking everyone participating in the teleconference can hear every noise that you, your children, your pets and the birds in the garden are making. If you are intending to use video when invited to speak, please also consider your location and whether it has an appropriate ‘background’ (e.g. plain background or study).
12. Equipment / Preparation – Make sure you have appropriate equipment, and especially know how to: -
  - a. Join the meeting dependant on the equipment you will be using.
  - b. Adjust your settings such as microphone sensitivity and volume levels
  - c. Mute/unmute your equipment (both video and audio) – this is very important
13. Fully charge your equipment, long meetings can take a lot of battery.

14. Please join the meeting a couple of minutes before the meeting starts so that the meeting can start on time. If you wish to 'attend' for only part of the meeting, please liaise with the Democratic Services team who will look to assist as far as practicable.
15. When joining the meeting, you should mute your audio and not use video.
16. Only when invited to participate in the meeting by the Chair should you turn on audio (and video should you wish).
17. When speaking please say your full name and your role in proceedings (i.e. agent, applicant, objector, Town Clerk etc).
18. Each participant will have a maximum of five minutes, after which they will be requested to stop.

## **Remote Planning Committee Procedures**

### **Scope of the Protocol**

1. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council Procedure Rules (“CPR”) and Planning Protocol (“the Protocol”) shall, where relevant apply in the determination of the business before the meeting. In addition to the CPR however the conduct of the meeting shall take place in accordance with this protocol and in the following way.

### **Public Speaking**

2. Only those persons who have registered to speak with Democratic Services in accordance with the [Council’s approved procedure](#) can ‘attend’ the remote meeting. Such persons will be sent a link to gain access to the meeting.

### **Procedure Rules during the Meeting**

3. The Chair will first introduce them self and their Vice Chair and will confirm the meeting, the date and time and the business to be considered. The Chair will also advise that in the event of technical difficulties where the Chair is lost due to connection issues, the Vice Chair will step in to chair the meeting. Monitoring will be undertaken throughout the meeting to confirm we are quorate by the Chair and Democratic Services officer.
4. The Chair will ask all persons participating in the meeting to mute their microphones while other people are speaking, and only turn on their microphones when they need or wish to speak. Members and the Chair will be expected to use the ‘Chat’ facility available to indicate whether they wish to speak or raise any particular issue and the Chair will monitor this throughout the meeting also the raise your hand function
5. The Chair will advise that this meeting is being recorded and it will be available to the public via the Council’s website ([www.npt.gov.uk](http://www.npt.gov.uk)) after conclusion of the meeting and participation in this meeting is deemed to be consent to such recording.
6. The Chair will remind those Members present of the Procedural Rules and this protocol and of the guidance note issued to Members regarding remote attendance.
7. From the list prepared by Democratic Services, the Chair will conduct an alphabetical roll call of those present, in the following order:

- (i) The Committee
  - (ii) Other Members
  - (iii) Council officers present
  - (iv) Any statutory bodies present
  - (v) All other interested parties
8. The Chair will also confirm that there is a quorum and that the meeting can therefore proceed.
  9. The Chair will ask Members for declarations of interest (alphabetically) and Members shall indicate verbally whether they have any interests to declare.
  10. If a Member is required to 'leave' the meeting due to a personal/prejudicial interest, then they will leave the Teams meeting for that item, and then be invited back in by the Democratic Services Officer on conclusion of that item.
  11. The Chair will proceed to work through the business in the Agenda in the order listed in the papers.
  12. The item will be introduced by the Planning Officer who will give a formal presentation of the item – with the presentation shown by sharing the presenter's screen - concluding with a formal recommendation
  13. Where applicable, the Chair will then ask any interested party/parties to address the Committee with any representations they wish to make, in the following order:
    - The local Ward Member, if not on Planning Committee, will be invited to speak for a maximum of five minutes\* by the Chair.
    - The representative of the Community or Town Council (if present) will then be invited to speak for a maximum of five minutes\* by the Chair.
    - The Chairperson will then invite the Supporter (if present) to speak for a maximum of five minutes\*;
    - The Chairperson will then invite the Objector (if present) to speak for a maximum of five minutes\*;
    - The Chairperson will invite the Applicant/Agent (if present) to address Committee for a maximum of five minutes\*;
    - Time limits will be strictly adhered to
  14. After they have made their representations the Chair will confirm whether they have anything else they wish to add.
  15. The Chair will confirm that Committee Members have read the item of business being considered

16. The Chair will ask the presenting officer whether there is anything they wish to add to the report.
17. The Chair will then go to any questions that Members wish to raise, with members using the 'chat' function to register their intention to address the Committee
18. Once Committee Members have addressed the meeting, any ward Member present will be invited to make any final comments they may have.
19. The Chair will then ask Committee Members, other Members, and officers present (including statutory body representatives) whether they have any further matters that they wish to raise
20. The Chair will read the recommendation that Members will be asked to vote on.
21. The Chair will ask for a proposer and seconder of the recommendation.
22. The proposer and seconder will identify themselves as proposer and seconder
23. Each Committee Member will be called on alphabetically by the Chair to confirm that they have heard the full debate without interruption, and whether they are voting "For", "Against" or "Abstaining" and the overall decision will be recorded by the Democratic Services Officer and noted in the Minutes (unless a recorded vote in line with the CPRs is requested).
24. The Democratic Services Officer will confirm the outcome of the vote.
25. The Chair will then move on to the next item.
26. Where matters are private/exempt the Chair will confirm the reason for considering the matter in private and ask for a proposer and seconder to go into private session. The Chair will ask if there are any objections to this by any member, who shall state what their objection is. If no objection is raised the Chair will indicate, unless there is any further objection, that the motion to go into private session is carried.
27. The Chair will confirm once all matters have been considered and will confirm the close of the meeting. Advice will then be provided by the Chair where Members of the public are able to get information concerning the matters discussed today (those being via the NPT Website)