



Virtual Meeting Procedures & Protocol

Adopted by Towyn & Kinmel Bay Town Council at Full Council Meeting held on 14/05/2025.

Reviewed & Approved at Full Council Annual Meeting held on 13/05/2026.

Background:

- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”), passed by the Senedd on 18 November 2020 and receiving Royal Assent on 20 January 2021, provides Town and Community Councils in Wales with the legal authority to hold virtual meetings. This enables Council business to be conducted remotely when necessary. A variety of platforms are available for this purpose, including Microsoft Teams, Skype, Google Hangouts, and Zoom—each offering different features and limitations.
- Any meeting of the Council or its Committees held virtually after 7th May 2020 shall be considered a formal Council meeting and must be conducted in accordance with the agenda and summons issued by the Clerk. Such meetings remain subject to the Council’s Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and associated policies, except where overridden by Welsh Government regulations.
- Following the transition to Microsoft 365 as the Town Council’s IT platform, all virtual meetings will be conducted using Microsoft Teams. These meetings will be jointly hosted by the Clerk and the Chair using the Clerk’s official Microsoft Teams account, ensuring improved efficiency, security, and consistency in the conduct of Council business.

Prior to the Meeting:

- A meeting link and joining instructions will be sent electronically to all members with the agenda via email. The agenda will also be published on the Council’s website to enable members of the public to attend, as they would in person. Members of the public wishing to attend must email the Clerk in advance to pre-register and receive the meeting link and/or password. Attendees will also have the option to dial into the meeting via telephone.
- Attendees will enter the Microsoft Teams ‘lobby’ (waiting room) prior to the meeting, which will open 15 minutes before the official start time to allow for technical checks. The host(s) will have the ability to mute or remove any disruptive participants at the request of the Chair.

- All participants, except for the Chair, will be muted upon the meeting's commencement. Participants who wish to speak must indicate this using the "Raise Hand" feature or by raising their hand on camera. The Chair will invite speakers to unmute as appropriate. The host(s) can mute participants if needed.

Procedures During the Meeting:

- All Councillors must display their full name in Microsoft Teams to ensure transparency and public identification, as would be the case during in-person meetings.
- If a Councillor declares an interest in an item on the agenda, they will be placed back in the waiting room for the duration of that item. They will be readmitted once the item is concluded.
- For cybersecurity reasons, the Teams chat, file sharing, and screen sharing functions will be disabled for participants during the meeting. If needed, the Clerk may use the screen sharing function to display documents.
- As in face-to-face meetings, members of the public may speak only during the designated Public Participation agenda item unless specifically invited to contribute by the Chair.
- Participants who wish to speak must raise their hand using the "Raise Hand" tool, or wave on camera if unable to access the tool. For those attending via audio only, the Chair will invite them to speak prior to the end of each agenda item or before a vote.
- Councillors must introduce themselves by name before speaking, for the benefit of any attendees participating via audio. Members of the public may also be asked to introduce themselves when invited to speak.
- The method of voting (e.g., verbal, hand raise, or chat-based) will be determined by the Council or Committee at its first virtual meeting.

Advice for Attendees:

- Participants may wish to use Microsoft Teams' Virtual Background feature to protect their privacy or should be mindful of what is visible on camera.
- Members are advised to ensure their device is protected with up-to-date antivirus software. Where possible, joining the meeting via web browser is recommended rather than using the desktop or mobile app.
- Attendees should not grant Microsoft Teams access to their personal contacts, calendars, or emails.
- Confidential matters should not be discussed outside of the meeting context, even if the platform is considered secure.

- **Be mindful that all participants may be able to see and hear you throughout the meeting.**

Public Participation:

- **Members of the public may attend virtual meetings after registering in advance with the Clerk.**
- **Members of the public may only speak during the designated Public Participation item on the agenda unless invited to do so by the Chair. These are formal business meetings of the Town Council, not public forums.**
- **Public attendees are asked to:**
 - a) Respect the Chair and wait to be called upon.
 - b) Mute their microphone after speaking.

Photographing, Recording, Broadcasting, or Transmitting:

- **Photographing, recording, broadcasting, or transmitting meetings by any means is permitted, provided it complies fully with the Town Council's Policy on Audio/Visual Recording and Photography at Council Meetings.**
- **Recording and reporting the Council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those who undertake the recording and reporting to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act, the Public Order Act Part III (1986 as amended), the Equality Act 2010 and the laws of libel and defamation.**
- **The Council may also choose to record, broadcast, or photograph its own meetings and may store or dispose of this material in accordance with its data retention policies. Any such recordings will be deleted once the minutes of the recorded meeting are formally approved by Full Council.**