

## LINDSEY PARISH COUNCIL

41 Beech Road

Saxmundham

IP17 1FQ

Tel: 07976 702246

e-mail: [lindseypc@outlook.com](mailto:lindseypc@outlook.com)

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Paper prepared by: Clerk to the Parish Council for meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020

### **Statutory Business of the Parish Council – COVID - 19**

#### Background:

On 2 April, the government published The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. These regulations come into force on 4 April.

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) come in to force on 4 April. Broadly speaking, the 2020 Regulations enable local councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May next year. They also remove the requirement to hold an annual meeting. The 2020 Regulations apply to local council meetings, committee and sub-committee meetings in England.

The statutory requirements for meetings are mainly contained in the Local Government Act 1972 (“the 1972 Act”) and the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (“the 1960 Act”). The Government included s.78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020 which gives the Secretary of State the power to make Regulations to make provisions for the holding of meetings. The 2020 Regulations set out those provisions.

#### **a) Meetings of the Parish Council – update**

Following the government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4 July, as at 26 June, both NALC and SLCC strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face to face contact. The government rules still state that we should all work from home if we can.

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.

However, where a local council does have an identified need to hold a physical meeting, as they are unable to conduct council business any other way, they can consider doing so from 4<sup>th</sup> July. These meetings must be managed within the social distancing and ‘safer workplaces’ guidance produced by Government, which includes the requirement to conduct a risk assessment to determine if it is feasible and safe to hold a physical meeting.

It is important that this risk assessment is carried out, and any identified actions to reduce risk to attendees are implemented before any face to face meetings resume. Councils must keep documentation of this risk assessment and the reasons why the council has taken the decision to return to face to face meetings.

#### **To note:**

- **Council is informed that, to ensure that there are four meetings held during the year in accordance with legislation, the following scheduled meetings stand:**
  - 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 – via videoconferencing**
  - 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020 – via videoconferencing**
  - 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – via videoconferencing**
  - 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – to be determined**