

AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE RULES FOR REMOTE MEETINGS

Introduction

Further to the implementation of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ('the Remote Meetings Regulations') these Rules and guidance provide for process and conduct of any remote meetings of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority ("**MFRA**") and its various Committees, held under the provision of the Remote Meeting Regulations.

These Rules should be read in conjunction with MFRA's Procedural Standing Orders contained within MFRA's Constitution. The Regulations made under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 apply notwithstanding any other legislation or current or pre-existing Standing Orders or any other rules of the MFRA governing meetings and apply to any meetings held prior to 7th May 2021. This means that wherever there is conflict with the Constitution, these Rules takes precedence in regard to any procedures relating to any Meetings of MFRA or its Committees.

The effect of the Regulations on MFRA's Constitution is to insert what are, in effect mandatory Standing Order for the purposes of holding meetings remotely, either wholly or partially.

These Rules will be replaced or amended as detailed below:

Definitions within the Standing Orders to include:

"Remote Meeting" - A meeting held in any place as defined in Section 5(1) of the regulations including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

"Remote Meetings Regulations" - The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local MFRA Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392('the Regulations')

Meetings of the Authority

Meetings of the Authority can be held in a place as determined by the Authority which may include electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

The Remote Meetings Regulations no longer require for MFRA to hold an Annual General Meeting during what would have been the normal 2020/2021 municipal year. The meeting can be delayed or postponed until the following Annual General Meeting in 2021 as appropriate.

It should be noted that if the Annual Meeting is delayed, all appointments from the 2019 Annual Meeting will continue.

Quoracy of Meetings

All remote meetings of MFRA and its committees can operate with minimum quorum level as detailed within the constitution. In the event that a remote meeting commences quorate however during course of proceedings becomes inquorate due to unforeseen circumstances e.g. IT issues, the meeting facilitator will bring this to the attention of the Person Presiding who may temporarily suspend the meeting until the issue can be resolved and the meeting recommenced.

If the meeting remains inquorate and the issues cannot be resolved, the meeting will end and any items not dealt with will be deferred to the next appropriate meeting.

Any such circumstances will be fully recorded in the minutes produced for that meeting

Members will be counted as in attendance and counting towards the Quorum if they can comply with the following conditions at the specific time of the scheduled meeting

- To Hear; and
- To be Heard by others in attendance, members of the public exercising their right to be heard at a meeting and members of the public attending the meeting.

Where practicable Members should also see and be seen.

Prevention of disorderly conduct

Should a member of the public interrupt or disrupt proceedings of the meeting when they have not been invited to speak then the person presiding over the meeting shall warn them, if they still continue to cause a disturbance they will be removed from the virtual meeting.

Voting

Where a formal vote is required, a roll call of all member's present will be conducted, to record a vote the Democratic Services Officer will ask each member in turn to state their voting intention (Against, For, or Abstain) clear notes will be kept of the votes made. These will then be counted, announced, and recorded in the minutes.

In the event of any vote being equally divided the Person Presiding will have the casting vote.

Declaration of Interest

If any Member declares a prejudicial interest in line with the Standing Order 26.2 the Member will be removed from the virtual Meeting at the relevant point in time and invited to re-join when appropriate.

Public Participation

If any member of the public wishes to participate in the meeting in line with Standing Order 11, they will be provided with an invitation to join the Meeting, and will be invited to speak at the appropriate time.

Public Attendance

The public will be able to view the meeting online. The means of accessing the remote meeting will be contained within the published Agenda for the applicable meeting which will be available on MFRA's website.