

AVON FIRE AUTHORITY MEETINGS INFORMATION IN RELATION TO VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Due to Covi-19 situation, we have had to postpone a number of Fire Authority meetings whilst we were awaiting changes to Local Government regulations in order to be able to hold the meetings remotely.

The Fire Authority meeting on 12 May 2020 is a replacement for the postponed meeting of 25 March 2020. Papers had already been submitted and published but have been updated.

Following changes to local Government rules, Avon Fire Authority will be using video conferencing to hold all forthcoming public meetings 'virtually'.

Councillors will use Zoom to take part in the meetings and make formal decisions on agenda items as required. This will enable the business of the Authority to resume.

However, using virtual facilities means that there will be several changes to how the meetings are conducted which include:

- All AFA meetings will be streamed onto the Avon Fire Authority YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/AvonFireService>
- Members of the Public will be able to view the meetings using this facility
- The meeting will also be recorded and uploaded onto the Avon Fire Authority website in the usual way.
- Public Access Statements – the system to submit a public access statement will remain the same and all requests should be submitted at least two working days prior to the meeting. (Deadline dates are provided on the Avon Fire Authority website). Public Access Statements will not be able to be presented at the meeting by the author but will be received by Members and published along with the minutes of the meeting.

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (The Regs), made under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 make a number of changes to the legal requirements for holding and convening Fire Authority (and other public bodies) meetings. The Regs insert mandatory standing orders into existing ones to enable greater flexibility in carrying out and discharging Fire Authority business. The Regs are temporary, having effect (unless new changes are brought in) only until 7th May 2021.

The main changes are;

- 1.Meetings can be convened and held remotely
- 2.Members can participate remotely provided they can hear and be heard (and preferably see and be seen)
- 3. There is no need to convene and hold an AGM until May 2021, though one can be held if the Authority chooses to do so.

- All appointments e.g. the Chair currently serving will continue until May 2021, unless they resign or an AGM is called
- All the requirements regarding publication and inspection of documents, convening meetings etc. can be carried out electronically
- The public must be able to hear (and preferably see) meetings live, though rights to public access statements may be restricted or modified
- All other procedural requirements contained in Standing orders e.g. quorum, declaring interest, exclusion of the press or public, will apply, unless specifically changed by the Regs, or amended by the Authority if appropriate.
- IT failures regarding remote access may require a meeting to be adjourned or re convened
- Members should be mindful of the circumstances under which meetings are held, and abide by any guidance or protocols issued to aid good governance and decision making

Note: this is a summary of a complex legal provision and does not amount to a definitive analysis of the legislation

Following discussion between the Chair and the deputy Clerk it has been agreed that for the 12 May 2020 AFA meeting that public access statements are able to be received up until midday on 11th May 2020.