



Protocol for Members of the Public Attending In-person Council, Cabinet and Committee Meetings (updated for Stage 4 of the Government’s roadmap from 19 July 2021)

Background

This Protocol applies to support meetings held during the ongoing Coronavirus 19 pandemic; it has been written to align to East Suffolk Council’s arrangements and guidance and will be updated as these evolve.

General Principles

The Council will seek to hold its public meetings in ways that are lawful, transparent and safe for all who are involved.

By law, formal Council meetings are required to be “open to the public”. However, as the Government has said, while Covid cases are high and rising, everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious. As such, a decision has been taken that our formal meetings will continue to take place in a socially distanced way, which means that space within the Council’s meeting rooms is currently limited.

Members of the public are, therefore, requested to attend in person only when they feel that it is reasonably necessary. Because of the limited space, access into the meeting room is not guaranteed with space allocated on a first come, first served basis with precedence given to those who have notified the Democratic Services Team in advance of their intention to attend. It will be a condition of entry that members of the public must wear facemasks when walking around, must socially distance and provide contact details for track and trace purposes.

Meetings will also be broadcast live via the Council’s YouTube channel to enable members of the public to view proceedings remotely.

Prior to the meeting

Members of the public wishing to attend in person are encouraged to take a lateral flow test in advance of the meeting to help minimise the risk of spreading the disease.

Anyone wishing to speak at Planning Committees either in person or remotely must register in advance in accordance with the Planning Public Speaking Protocol on the Council’s website – please click [here](#) to find out more.

Applicants/objectors and their representatives attending Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings should notify the Licensing Team of their intention to attend either in person or remotely at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to observe proceedings in person are encouraged to register their intention to attend the Council's offices by emailing democraticservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk by 12 noon on the working day prior to the meeting so that Officers can manage the meeting in a Covid secure way. The Team will endeavour to accommodate members of the public wishing to attend in person and will advise on the necessary health and safety precautions in place.

Arriving at the meeting

- Members of the public should seek to arrive at the relevant Council office 10-15 minutes before the start of the meeting, but not earlier. Please wait outside the building (in cars if arriving by car) if you are earlier.
- As you enter the building, please scan the QR code poster on the door with the NHS Track and Trace App; if you are unable to do so, please inform the Democratic Services Team representative who will be on hand outside the meeting room so that they can record your details on a manual Track and Trace system.
- Please wear a facemask whilst moving around the building and follow all instructions such as any one-way system and the lift capacity. These are clearly indicated on signs throughout the building.
- Please take hand sanitiser from the cleaning station, or use your own, regularly.
- Speakers that have registered to speak will normally need to wait outside the meeting room, socially distanced (2 metres apart) until their item is being considered and will be called forward at the appropriate time by a member of the Democratic Services Team.
- Members of the public are asked to inform the Democratic Services Team upon arrival which item they are interested in, and they will then be directed to an allocated seat in the meeting room by the Democratic Services Team at the appropriate time.

In the meeting

- The meeting room, including desks and microphones, will have been sanitised for use.
- Although Council staff and Councillors are allowed to remove their face masks once seated, members of the public must wear face masks at all times whilst in Council offices. Members of the public who have registered to speak are allowed to remove their masks whilst they are addressing the Committee for their three minutes or are answering any direct questions.
- A glass of water will be available for each participant in the meeting e.g., Members of the public that have registered to speak at a Planning or Licensing Committee, however, for those members of the public that are only observing, drinks will not be provided. You can bring a drink with you but please take any empty bottles etc away with you.
- If a meeting is due to last for a long period, there will be dedicated comfort breaks. Please follow instructions from the Democratic Services Team and endeavour to keep 2 metres apart from other people.
- You are welcome to use the facilities but please be aware of the signage on the doors restricting numbers.
- The meeting room should be well ventilated where possible – as such, any windows will be opened.

After the meeting

- Please take all belongings and any rubbish with you.

- Please leave the meeting and the building promptly in accordance with the instructions from the Democratic Services Team and do not congregate with other people.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Democratic Services Team by emailing democraticservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk or telephoning 01502 523521.

19 July 2021