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**Sent:** 29 April 2020 15:24  
**To:** Planning Rother <[Planning.E-mailAddress@rother.gov.uk](mailto:Planning.E-mailAddress@rother.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Planning & democracy for Rother during Covid 19

To Head of Planning /Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning

Dear Mr Hickling, Cllrs Vine-Hall and Prochak

### **Planning & democracy for Rother during Covid 19**

Following the introduction of regulations allowing Council meetings to take place virtually during the coronavirus lockdown (through to April 2021), we note that the Government has said it is up to each local authority to decide how they conduct meetings, how voting procedures work and how to ensure that the public has access.

CPRE Sussex would expect that at Rother:

- All planning decisions that would normally come to a Planning Committee should continue to do so (and not be delegated to officers or an ad hoc committee comprising officers and certain Planning Committee members) – including major applications, but also those where Parish/Town Council and officers disagree or where local councillors call for it to be brought to Committee.
- These meetings should be reliably live streamed on video.
- Members of the public and Parish/Town Council representatives should have the right to address the Committee for the normal permitted length of time, if not indeed for an extended time.
- There should be facility for members of the public to listen in real time to (and preferably view) the Planning Committee discussions and decision-making.
- A recording (audio or preferably audio-visual) should subsequently be made available via the Council website.
- Other than for genuinely urgent applications, for example directly related to tackling Covid 19, these systems should be in place prior to any new Planning Committee taking place. If necessary, committee meetings should be delayed to ensure there is no gap in the transparent operation of a democratic planning system.
- The extension of all deadlines attached to the determination of planning applications and responding to consultations.

- A proposal for amending the Statement Of Community Involvement in the light of the Covid 19 Regulations.
- A statement on how Rother proposes to conduct work on the preparation of the new Local Plan to avoid unnecessary delays but to ensure maximum public involvement and participation.
- More generally, the publication by your Council of a report setting out how, under the Covid 19 regulations, it will follow best practice for the involvement of communities, particularly disadvantaged communities and those with less access to technology and broadband.
- The creation of a designated Council website page, widely promoted, to give adequate notice of and full information on upcoming meetings and consultations, providing clear guidance to communities and third parties on how to take part.

We would be very grateful if you could confirm in due course what arrangements you are putting in place to meet the requirements of the Covid 19 Regulations, so that we can help communicate this to our members and the public. If we can help in any way, please do let us know.

We appreciate that these are very difficult times and Council staff and resources are under enormous pressure. We thank you for the good work you are doing and hope that you and colleagues remain safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Hardy

Trustee CPRE Sussex