

South West Local Authority COVID-19 Protocol

This briefing note sets out the working arrangements currently in place for the various South West local authorities as a result of Covid-19.

Version 8.0 22nd May 2020 - please note updates since v7.0, dated 7th May, are shown in grey

Local Authority	Contact Methods	Committee Protocol	Decision Making Approach
BCP Council (Bournemouth Christchurch Poole)	Planning contact centre for 3 former councils are open. Emails only for case officers. Can request call backs. All offices closed.	Planning Committee running virtually via Skype. Live-stream available through YouTube. Next Committee 11th June.	Decision making remains unchanged. New applications accepted but delay in validation. Currently the aim is put up site notices and carry out consultation in the latter period of the statutory timeframe, when lockdown lifted.
Cornwall Council	Emails only. Call backs may be possible. All offices closed.	Planning Committee running virtually. Live-stream available through Microsoft Teams. West Sub-Area Planning Committee: 1st June.	Decisions focused on those where site visits have already taken place. Protocol in place for applications which would go to Committee – 6 step process.
Dorset Council (North/East/ Purbeck, West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland)	Available by phone and emails, although some of the former councils may only be available by email. Can request call backs.	Planning Committee running virtually – viewing available via Microsoft Teams. Western & Southern Area Committee 28th May, Eastern Area Committee 3rd June.	Decision making remains unchanged. Former North and West Dorset areas: Publicity of application to be run in the Western Gazette instead of in the Blackmore Vale Magazine.
East Devon District Council	Available by phone and email. Offices closed.	Planning Committee running virtually via Zoom. Live-stream available through YouTube. Last Committee was held 18th May. Next Committee date unknown.	Decision making remains unchanged. Site visits to be carried out only if essential and safe to do so.
Exeter City Council	Available by phone and email. Offices closed.	Planning Committee running virtually via Skype. Next Committee 1st June.	Decision making remains unchanged. Site visits to be carried out only if necessary and safe to do so.
Mendip District Council	Emails only. Reduced service. Offices closed.	Planning Committee to be held virtually, however the first scheduled virtual meeting for the 27th May has been cancelled. Next meeting, 19th June, is currently scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber.	Risk assessments being carried out prior to any site visits and extensions of time agreed if necessary. Applicants may be expected to post site notices themselves.
Mid Devon District Council	Emails only but can request call backs. Working remotely.	Planning Committee running virtually via Zoom. Audio recordings available via SoundCloud. Last Committee was held 20th May. Next meeting 17th June, is currently scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber.	Decision making remains unchanged. No site visits are being carried out unless absolutely essential. The Pre-application service is suspended until further notice.
North Devon District Council	Available by phone and email.	Exploring options for virtual meetings. Next meeting scheduled for 10th June.	Decision making remains unchanged. No site visits taking place unless essential to do so.
North Somerset Council	Email only can request call-back.	Planning Committees running virtually through Microsoft Teams. Live-stream available through YouTube. Next Committee date 17th June.	Decision making remains unchanged. Determining applications currently focused on those where site visits have already taken place. Not all applications can be publicised in the usual manner.
Plymouth City Council	Available by phone and email. All Officers working remotely.	Exploring options for virtual meetings. Likely to be held on Microsoft Teams and webcast on Council website. Next Committee 18th June is currently scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber.	Determining applications currently focused on those where site visits have already taken place, with a limited number of site visits now being carried out only if safe to do so. If a site visit is necessary and cannot be carried out an extension of time is to be agreed.

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Sedgemoor District Council	Available by phone and emails, but recommend email in the first instance.	Planning Committee running virtually. Live-stream available through YouTube. Next Committee 26th May.	Decision making remains unchanged. A limited number of site visits now being carried out only if safe to do so. If a site visit is necessary and cannot be carried out an extension of time is to be agreed. Applicants may be expected to post site notices themselves.
South Hams District Council	Emails only. Can request call back. Offices closed.	Planning Committee running virtually via Skype. Next Committee 4th & 10th June.	Decision making remains unchanged. No site visits taking place and if required, the decision will be delayed. Applicants may be expected to post site notices themselves.
South Somerset District	Some officers may be available by phone but emails preferable. Call back may be possible.	Planning Committee running virtually via Zoom. Delayed streaming available on YouTube. Next meeting: 27th May (Area North).	Chief Executive has temporary delegated powers in coordination with committee members via informal virtual committee meetings. Site visits may be carried out if it is essential and safe to do so. Applicants may be expected to post site notices themselves.
Somerset West and Taunton Council	Available by phone and emails, but recommend email in the first instance. Offices closed.	Planning Committee running virtually via Zoom. The public can view meetings on the Council's webcast page. Next meeting: 28th May.	Site visits may be carried out if it is essential and safe to do so. Decision making remains unchanged.
Teignbridge District Council	Available by phone and emails. Emails preferred.	Planning Committee to be held virtually via Zoom. Live-stream available through YouTube. Next Committee: 9th June. Major applications are likely to be considered at the July Committee.	New pre-application requests accepted, but site-visits cannot be carried out. Decision making remains unchanged. No site visits taking place and if required, the decision will be delayed. Applicants may be expected to post site notices themselves.
Torbay Council	Some officers may be available by phone but emails preferable. May be possible to request a call back.	No Planning Committee scheduled at this time.	Delegated powers have been extended to all application types except majors – majors can be determined under delegated powers only under 'exceptional circumstances' by the Assistant Director, but in coordination with members.
Torridge District Council	Phone calls are redirected to work mobiles. Emails are preferable.	Planning Committee to be held virtually via Zoom. Live-stream available through YouTube. Next Committee: 4th June.	Site visits carried out only if absolutely essential. Delay in validation, but still validating applications. Decision making remains unchanged.
West Devon Borough Council	Emails only. May be possible to request a call back.	Still exploring meeting by virtual means. Planning Committee 2nd June cancelled. Next meeting scheduled 30th June in the Council Chambers.	Decision making remains unchanged. No site visits taking place and if required, the decision will be delayed. Applicants may be expected to post site notices themselves.