



From mountain to sea

Scheme of Governance

Part 4G - Guidance on Fully Virtual and Hybrid Meetings

10 March, 2023



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GUIDANCE ON FULLY VIRTUAL AND HYBRID MEETINGS

The following guide sets out the recommended procedures for participation in Full Council and Committee fully virtual and hybrid meetings.

1. Introduction

Where technology permits, all participants will have the right to choose whether to attend Council and Committee meetings in person or virtually.

2. Standing Orders

Standing Order 5.1.8 states that “The Chair may allow any Committee Member to participate and vote in a Meeting although not actually present at the location where the Meeting is being held by way of the Council’s agreed technology. The Chair’s consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.”

3. Chairing Meetings and Quorum

The Chair should ensure insofar as possible that all present at meetings, whether virtually or in person, are able to participate on an equal footing.

Committee Members participating in person and virtually will be included when calculating the quorum of the meeting. Accordingly, there will not require to be a quorum of Members physically present at a meeting venue.

4. Prior to the Meeting

- 4.1 All meeting participants should confirm their preference for attendance at meetings at least one week prior to the meeting date. The Chair may allow a lesser period of notice in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.2 The Chair may decide to hold a fully virtual meeting in circumstances where a hybrid meeting had been arranged but the majority of committee members have indicated that they intend to participate virtually.
- 4.3 For Hybrid meetings, the meeting room and equipment prior to the meeting shall be set up in such a way that, where possible, the Chair can see and hear all participants whether joining in person or virtually.

5. At the Meeting

- 5.1 All attendees joining virtually should be in a quiet private location, should, where possible, keep their video camera on for the duration of the meeting and particularly when speaking and ensure their microphones are muted when not speaking.
- 5.2 If a recording of the meeting is required all Committee Members attending the Meeting must be notified and agree to the recording in accordance with Standing Order 6.1.2.
- (a) Any participant who seeks to record the meeting without permission from the Chair and other Members attending the Meeting would be in breach of Principle 1 of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 5.3 Should any attendee lose connection, the Chair has authority to call a short adjournment to determine if the link can quickly be re-established.
- (a) If the connection cannot be re-established the Chair will determine whether the meeting can continue with the business. Any attendee who is unable to reconnect to the meeting would be deemed to have left the Meeting at the time the connection failed.
- 5.4 All Committee Members participating in a vote will cast their vote orally via a roll call or using the Council's agreed technology where available.
- 5.5 As noted above, attendees should ensure that their microphone is on mute until such time as they are invited to speak by the Chair. Attendees should alert the Chair of their request to speak by using the RAISE HAND function in an MS Teams meeting or other agreed technology. Alternatively, attendees can orally indicate their wish to speak.
- 5.6 A Committee Member(s) attending virtually who has declared an interest in an item and decides to withdraw must leave the meeting whilst the item is being considered. The Committee Officer will invite the Committee Member back into the meeting or advise them via MS Teams or other agreed technology when they can rejoin the meeting. In person participants should leave the meeting room and will be advised when to rejoin the meeting.

6. Quasi-Judicial and Regulatory Matters including Planning

- 6.1 Quasi-judicial and regulatory matters include but are not limited to any planning applications before Area Committees, Infrastructure Services Committee and Full Council and licensing applications before Area Committees, the Licensing Sub-Committee and the Licensing Board.

- 6.2 Committee Member(s) attending virtually at meetings where quasi-judicial and regulatory matters are being considered should, where possible, use the video camera function. In determining such applications, all Committee Members must be able to receive and consider the same information.
- 6.3 Any presentations submitted as part of an application must be shared via the public website in advance of the meeting and with all meeting attendees where possible via the MS Teams Share Screen function or other agreed technology.
- 6.4 Any additional papers submitted at the meeting and accepted by the Committee must be provided to the Committee Member(s) attending virtually. The Chair may agree to adjourn the meeting for a short period to facilitate this and to give time for Committee Members to consider the new information.
- 6.5 The Chair must confirm with the Committee Member(s) attending virtually that they are satisfied that they have received the same information as those physically present and feel able to participate in the determination of the application. If a Committee Member advises that their connection to the meeting has not been sufficiently stable and has compromised their access to information, they should consider not taking part in the decision.

7. Confidential and Exempt Items

- 7.1 If the Committee meeting includes confidential or exempt items, the Chair will identify the Committee Member(s) via the video functionality or other secure method as agreed.
- 7.2 The Committee Member(s) joining virtually must confirm that they are in a secure private location and that there are no other persons present in the room.

8. Public Participation

- 8.1 The arrangements for public participation in Council and Committee meetings are set out in detail in Standing Order 6. Where a valid request to speak is received, an invite to attend the Meeting concerned will be issued but Full Council or Committee has complete discretion whether requests to speak will be granted or not.
- 8.2 For Hybrid Meetings, where technology and accommodation permits, all public participants will have the choice to attend the meeting in person from the meeting venue or by way of the Council's agreed technology.
- 8.3 For Fully Virtual meetings, all public participants must attend the meeting by way of the Council's agreed technology.

9. Accessibility

- 9.1 The Council will promote accessibility to Fully Virtual and Hybrid Meetings for all attendees, including making arrangements for attendees to participate using alternative means where there may be barriers to their participation. This may include putting in place alternative arrangements for voting and ensuring access to information in advance of the meeting where required. The Council will ensure meeting arrangements allow for all attendees to participate on an equal footing where possible.