

Guidance for Participation in Remote Council and Committee Meetings (Committee Members)

1. Before the Meeting

- 1.1. Remote meetings have less scope for spontaneity than traditional Committees. Advance preparation is essential. Wherever possible notify the Chair and the relevant Democratic Services Officer (DSO) in good time before the meeting if you wish to speak on an item or will need to declare an interest and ensure that you are familiar with the content of the reports so that fewer questions need to be asked of Officers. This will assist with the flow of the meeting.
- 1.2. If a Member is substituting on your behalf ensure that your Group Office has notified the relevant DSO well in advance of the meeting.

2. Joining the Meeting

- 2.1. Join the meeting from an area of your home where you are unlikely to be disturbed. This is particularly important if the meeting may have to consider confidential information. (See Item no.3.15 under 'During the Meeting' below)
- 2.2. Ensure that your broadband connection is sufficiently stable to join the meeting. If your wifi signal is weak and you are accessing the meeting from a tablet or phone with a 4G data connection you may wish to try connecting via your mobile data instead. If you are accessing the meeting from a computer you may still be able to use this mobile data connection - turn on 'mobile hotspot' in the settings on your phone and connect to the hotspot when it appears on the list of available wifi connections.. If absolutely necessary you can join by making a voice-only call (you can do this by following the 'Join by Phone' option in your Google calendar invitation - you will need to dial the number and input the access code provided followed by #).
- 2.3. Ensure devices are fully charged or plugged in.
- 2.4. Don't forget to make sure you have a second device to hand on which you can access the meeting papers - it will be very difficult to read the agenda on the same device you are using to follow the meeting.
- 2.5. Ensure that you join the meeting on your RBK email account.
- 2.6. Try to ensure that your background is neutral (a blank wall is best).
- 2.7. Check that there are no documents or other items in view which you would not wish anybody to see - remember that photos and screenshots of documents can be enlarged to enable confidential information to be read by others.
- 2.8. Ensure the camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of your face. This may involve thinking about lighting in the room you're in (for example, sitting in front of a window may plunge your face into shadow). It may also involve

putting your webcam, laptop or tablet on top of a couple of books so that you can look into the camera face on. Use your device in landscape mode, not portrait.

- 2.9. Consider using earphones or a headset as it reduces the risk of feedback from your device's external speaker.
- 2.10. Do not join the meeting from within Modern Desktop.
- 2.11. Use the Google Chrome browser if possible, but Firefox and Safari and the last few releases of Microsoft Edge also work.
- 2.12. Join the meeting 10 minutes before it is due to start to ensure there is time to check network connections. The Chair will check that all participants can see and hear each other.

3. During the Meeting

- 3.1. The Chair will undertake a roll call at the start of the meeting and ask each Member of the Committee to confirm that they are present. If you join after the meeting has started use the chat facility within the Meet session (look for this symbol  in the top right hand corner of the screen) to inform the Chair of your arrival. This will enable the Chair to publicly announce your presence and the DSO to record your attendance.
- 3.2. Ensure your microphone is muted when you are not speaking. Generally you may keep your camera switched on except for very large meetings (such as Full Council) when it may be advisable to switch off to save bandwidth.
- 3.3. If you would like to participate in a debate and have not notified the Chair in advance, type your name into the chat function to indicate you wish to speak.
- 3.4. You may also use the chat function to raise a point of order, to indicate that you wish to move a motion or amendment, to confirm that you are joining or leaving the meeting or to flag technical issues related to the stream.
- 3.5. Please do not use the chat function for other purposes. The Chair and Officers will not be able to respond to questions through Chat because this would undermine the transparency of the meeting. The use of Chat during the meeting will also distract other Members. Remember that messages exchanged on Chat will be visible to Officers and the public participating directly in the meeting (though not to the public watching the live stream).
- 3.6. Do not click on links which appear on the screen such as 'start livestream' or to accept requests from members of the public attempting to join the meeting. This task should be reserved to the Chair, or the Democratic Services Officer acting under the Chair's instructions.
- 3.7. In accordance with the normal rules of debate, only speak when invited to by the Chair. Remember to unmute your microphone before speaking. You can use the shortcut Ctrl + D to do this.

- 3.8. Without the usual visual cues and microphone technology it will be more challenging for the Chair to manage the meeting. Respect the rulings of the Chair at all times and do not attempt to continue to speak if he/she has muted your microphone.
- 3.9. Try whenever possible to make all of your points in one contribution so as to limit the amount of back and forth between speakers.
- 3.10. Be mindful of the need for brevity in order to enhance the effectiveness of the meeting. Ideally each contribution should be restricted to no more than two minutes.
- 3.11. Do not use your screen to share documents which are not part of the agenda papers for the meeting.
- 3.12. Voting will normally be by roll call. When you are invited to indicate your vote on Planning and Licensing applications you will be asked to confirm before voting that you have been present for the entirety of the debate on the application.
- 3.13. It is recognised that in practical terms the use of messaging services may be helpful for Members who need to pass virtual 'notes' to colleagues within the meeting but this must be unobtrusive and care should be taken to avoid it drawing the focus away from what is being discussed. There must not be contact with others during consideration of planning applications.
- 3.14. If you need to leave the meeting as a result of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you must switch off your microphone and camera for the duration of the relevant debate but may, if you wish, remain connected so that you can listen to the audio stream and know when to 'return' to active participation in the meeting.
- 3.15. If the meeting goes into exempt (i.e. private) session you must ensure that nobody can see or overhear the proceedings. Failure to do so may be a breach of the Member Code of Conduct.
- 3.16. Remember that the public are observing the meeting and assume that at all times what you are saying and doing is visible in just the same way as it would be at a meeting in the Guildhall.
- 3.17. Check, and check again, that your microphone is switched off before making any comments that you may not wish others to hear!