



### Protocol for Virtual Meetings

Your Clerk host and attend meetings in a virtual environment, using secure platforms including *Microsoft Teams*, *Zoom*, *GoogleMeet* and *Skype*. Regardless of the software being used, all meeting participants are asked to **please co-operate fully with this protocol**.

#### Before joining the meeting, please...

- Download the appropriate software for the virtual meeting platform to your device. Your Clerk will advise you which software is required in advance of the meeting. Should you require any support with downloaded and/or accessing the required software, please contact Your Clerk [info@yourclerk.org.uk](mailto:info@yourclerk.org.uk) at least 48-hours before the meeting.
- Ensure that you can access the meeting from a private area, to protect the security and confidentiality of discussions in meetings.
- Ensure that conversations in the virtual environment cannot be overheard by others.

#### In the meeting...

- Please DO NOT record the meeting. If it has been requested and agreed to record the meeting (in whole or partially), this will be done by Your Clerk, with the recording filed securely\*.
- The Chair should have their screen view set to 'Large Gallery', to enable them to see all participants. Ideally, the Chair should access the meeting from a device that has a suitable screen size, i.e. from a laptop or iPad, rather than a 'phone, via a strong and stable Internet connection.
- Unless you are speaking, please ensure that your microphone is on 'mute'. This is to reduce interference from feedback noise.
- If a participant experiences any technical difficulties in the meeting, please notify the Chair or Your Clerk as soon as possible, using the 'Chat' facility or by emailing [info@yourclerk.org.uk](mailto:info@yourclerk.org.uk) **NB** if you are experiencing 'lag' or have a slower Internet connection speed, turning off your device's camera can help.
- If any participant wishes to speak, please raise your hand (virtual or physical), so that it is visible to the camera, to indicate to the Chair (and Your Clerk) that you wish to participate.
- Throughout the meeting, the Chair will carefully observe participants to ensure that those who wish to contribute are able to do so.
- If you wish to speak privately, in-meeting, to any participant(s), or to notify the Chair and/or Your Clerk of any issues, please use the 'Chat' facility.
- Please DO NOT use the 'Chat' facility to ask questions and make comments that you wish to appear in the record of the meeting. Your Clerk does not monitor the 'Chat' facility in-meeting to record items for the minutes.
- Participants should wait for the Chair (or Your Clerk) to invite them to speak before doing so. **NB** In a virtual environment, 'turn-taking' and pausing is necessary. Please try to avoid talking over other participants.
- If any meeting attendee wishes to share a document on-screen in the meeting, they are responsible for doing this, and for moving through the document pages/slides in the meeting. Your Clerk cannot provide assistance with the delivery of presentations and documents in-meeting. Any documents for presentation at the meeting should be sent to [info@yourclerk.org.uk](mailto:info@yourclerk.org.uk) at least 48-hours prior to the meeting, to be shared with all attendees, ahead of the meeting.
- The Chair should always ensure that all participants are able to contribute to the meeting, by repeatedly asking if anyone has any comments/questions.



- At the end of each agenda item, it is pertinent for the Chair to ask a final time for any comments/questions, before closing that item and moving to the next.

\* Recorded items DO NOT form part of the public record but may be used for training and monitoring purposes, as well as evidence for staff continued professional development (CPD), if requested.

### **Voting in the meeting**

As with physical meetings, it is important that voting takes place in a clear and unambiguous way.

Your Clerk has virtual governance systems in place to support the decision-making process.

- Where possible, items for decision should be notified to Your Clerk at least seven-days prior to the meeting date. Where this is not possible, please notify Your Clerk as soon as possible and the item will be discussed with the Chair (and where appropriate, the Principal/Headteacher) for inclusion under 'Matters Arising'. **NB** decisions will not be taken as 'Any Other Business'.
- If a decision is required on a confidential or sensitive item, any participant with a business or pecuniary interest will be placed in the virtual waiting room, while the remaining participants consider the item. Once the voting item is closed, any removed participants will be re-admitted to the virtual meeting.
- The Chair should invite the motion for consideration to be presented; then, invite any questions or comments from participants.
- Once the Chair is satisfied that there has been sufficient discussion on the motion, they will summarise the motion and invite votes from those participants who are eligible to vote.
- When voting on a motion, participants need to indicate if they are **a) in favour; b) against; or, c) abstaining** from the vote.
- The Chair should first ask eligible participants to please raise their hand (virtual or physical) if they are **a) in favour** of the motion. Your Clerk will then note the number of participants who support the motion.
- The Chair will then ask eligible participants to please raise their hand (virtual or physical) if they are **b) against** of the motion. Your Clerk will then note the number of participants who do not support the motion.
- Finally, the Chair will ask eligible participants who are **c) abstaining** from the vote, to please raise their hand (virtual or physical). Your Clerk will then note the number of participants who are abstaining from the vote.
- The outcome of the vote will be announced by the Chair (with support from Your Clerk) and recorded in the minutes.
- In the event that a closed ballot is requested, or required, Your Clerk will arrange for an 'e-vote' to be undertaken outside of the meeting. All eligible participants are expected to participate in the e-vote, details of which will be sent by Your Clerk to those attendees who are required to participate.

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