

## **Guidance on Hybrid Meetings**

**Hybrid Meetings are those held with some remote attendance but with the decision makers being physically present with social distancing measures in place**

**The following procedure shall be adopted in relation to the conduct of all meetings of the Council and its various committees and sub-committees within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972 and associated legislation. The Council's Procedure Rules, while still applying, are to be interpreted in light of this guidance note and adjusted accordingly.**

Council, committee and sub-committee meetings will be held in a meeting room as advertised on the published agenda, and members of the Committee wishing to participate will be required to be physically present in that meeting room. Except for in limited circumstances in which a resolution to exclude the press and public may be made, the press and public are by law permitted to attend these meetings. However, whilst social distancing measures remain in place, space for public attendees is very limited and, whilst it is the public's right to attend, those wishing to observe proceedings are encouraged to watch the live feed at [www.camden.gov.uk/webcast](http://www.camden.gov.uk/webcast). Those seeking to attend a meeting to present a deputation or petition with the agreement of the Chair, whilst they have the right to attend, are also encouraged to do so remotely. This guidance note sets out how such meetings will operate.

### **A. Attendance of committee members remotely**

1. For all Council, committee and sub-committee meetings, Members of these committees may not participate in a meeting in any way other than to be physically present in the meeting place. It is not appropriate for a Member of these committees to take part in the discussion remotely (and it is never lawful for a Member of any committee to purport to vote on an item remotely) and thus to potentially influence voting Members of the committee. Any Member of the committee not wishing to attend the meeting place, but wishing to watch the meeting, may do so at [www.camden.gov.uk/webcast](http://www.camden.gov.uk/webcast).

### **B. Method for conducting hybrid meetings**

1. The law requires that Members of the committee or sub-committee who wish to be counted as part of the quorum for the meeting and who wish to vote to be physically present at the place specified on the agenda for the meeting (the 'meeting place').
2. Other participants, such as councillors who are not members of the committee, officers and deputees, may join the meeting remotely and this will be facilitated using Microsoft Teams ('Teams'), using the calls functionality. Both those present in the meeting place and those joining remotely will be captured in the Teams call and on the live broadcast of the meeting.

3. The Teams call will utilise both the audio and video functionality so all remote participants<sup>1</sup> should be capable of being heard and seen by those physically present at the meeting place and by other remote participants, and vice versa.
4. It will not impact the lawfulness or otherwise of the meeting should a remote participant lose their connection or not be able to see the other participants for any part of the meeting, nor if they cannot be seen by other participants and / or the public. All participants will, as far as able, try to join the meeting using the Teams app or web browser and not via dialling into the meeting.
5. Unless a meeting is dealing with confidential items, it will be streamed to the public so that they may listen and watch (should video be available) but the public will not be able to participate unless section D below on deputations applies; these are meetings held in public via a digital connection, but are not public meetings. Therefore, other than with the permission of the Chair and as a depute, members of the public cannot participate.
6. The Chair will be provided with advice on procedure and meeting management by a committee officer and, for some meetings, a lawyer and other relevant officers. The committee officer will be physically present at the meeting place. Other officers will in most cases participate remotely.
7. Meetings will be streamed live as well as recorded, stored and uploaded to the Council's website. The Council will aim to do this within 48 hours of the meeting finishing.
8. Minutes will be taken and published in the usual manner.
9. In line with existing procedure rules, the ruling of the Chair on a point of order and on the construction or application of this guidance, procedure rules and standing orders shall not be challenged during any meeting, including any decision of the Chair to ask for contributors to be muted.

### **C. Prior to the meeting**

1. Agendas will be published on the [website](#) and via the modern.gov app, and a public deposit copy will be available at the Crowndale Centre reception. Hard copies can be made available on request. Unless a matter is urgent, five clear working days will elapse from the publication of the agenda to the holding of the meeting. Committee members will, as usual, receive an automated email when the agenda is published online containing a link to the agenda.
2. Councillors who are not members of the Committee will be asked to confirm to the committee officer by the deputation deadline their wish to address the Committee and on which items, and will then be sent a link to join the meeting

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<sup>1</sup> Remote participants are defined as: councillors who are not members of the committee but who seek to address the committee; officers advising the committee or presenting reports; any external partners / third-parties invited to address or advise the Committee; and deputees (including any member of the public with speaking rights).

remotely. Participation of non-Committee members will, as usual, be at the discretion at the Chair.

**D. At the meeting**

1. The committee officer will begin the Teams call 15 minutes before the meeting start time to allow remote participants to join promptly and check their audio / video feeds are working.
2. The usual rules as to numbers of members to create a quorum will apply, and only physical presence in the meeting place of a voting member or substitute will count towards the quorum.
3. The meeting will, as the first item of business on the agenda, note and agree the variations / interpretations of procedure rules as set out in this document. The meeting will then follow the published agenda as normal and be conducted in accordance with the procedure rules set out in the Constitution as supplemented by this document.
4. Any non-committee Member participating remotely who declares an interest in any item of business which would normally require them to leave the room shall switch off their microphone and camera for the duration of the item so they cannot be heard or seen by the other participants. They should also refrain from sending any messages using the chat function during the item or do anything that may be reasonably perceived as trying to influence the debate. Any such action may be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct. The relevant Member will still be able to see and hear the discussion and at the end of the item may switch their camera and microphone back on. The committee officer may use their ability to remotely switch microphones on and off to assist in this process.

Debate

5. Committee members present in the meeting place will indicate their desire to speak in the customary way by raising their hand. Any non-committee Member joining remotely will indicate a wish to speak by submitting their name using the "chat" function on Teams, and their participation will be at the discretion of the Chair. This "chat" will not be minuted nor be a formal part or contribution to the meeting. All participants should refrain from using the chat for any function other than indicating their wish to speak or indicating a loss of their audio feed (section C8) and will be reminded about this at the outset of the meeting.
6. When not speaking, participants will be asked to keep themselves muted. Officers may do this remotely to improve the audio quality of the meeting.

Interruptions to connections

7. If the audio feed of any non-committee Member joining the meeting remotely cuts out during the meeting they will:

- a) If still connected to Teams, use the 'chat' function to advise immediately that they can no longer hear the other participants;
  - b) If they are unable to use the Teams 'chat' function, use the emergency contact details provided to alert the relevant officer (usually the committee officer) by text message, who will advise the Chair.
8. Ordinarily the failure of the audio connection of a party joining the meeting remotely will not impact on the conduct of the meeting.

#### Deputations and petitions

9. Procedure rules with regard to deputations and petitions apply. Should the Chair agree to hear a deputation, the deputee will be encouraged to join the meeting remotely and issued with details on how to do this. Deputees will ordinarily need to provide an email address in order to join the meeting in this way.
10. Any person who would like to make a deputation, but cannot participate remotely due to technological reasons, or does not wish to do so, may attend the meeting place to give their deputation in person, subject to any restrictions on numbers required to maintain social distancing
11. If the Chair is notified of a deputee's audio feed failing during the item in which they have asked to address the Committee, then the Chair may adjourn the meeting for up to 15 minutes in order to re-establish the connection. Alternatively, the Chair may choose to move onto other items of business if considered appropriate, while the connection to the deputee is re-established.
12. Each deputation attending remotely will be required to identify a single speaker and where the connection of another member of the deputation party is interrupted, the Chair will not ordinarily adjourn the meeting but will have the discretion to do so where considered appropriate.
13. At the point at which their deputation is to be heard, the deputee should unmute their microphone so that they can address the meeting. Once the allotted time has expired they will be asked by the Chair to bring their remarks to a close and to mute their microphone. They may be asked to answer questions and to mute and unmute as required in order to do so.

#### Behaviour

14. The Chair will at their discretion be entitled to ask the committee officer to mute any remote contributors should they consider it appropriate. Should a remote participant become disruptive, the Chair will warn them and should that warning not result in a change of behaviour which is acceptable to the Chair then they shall, at their absolute discretion, be entitled to ask the committee officer to terminate the individual's participation in the meeting.

## **E. Licensing (Sexual Entertainment Venues) Sub-Committee and Licensing Panels**

1. The above procedure rules shall apply unless superseded below. The Licensing procedures set out in the Constitution (which are published on every licensing agenda) shall also apply but may be varied at the Chair's discretion and upon advice, in so far as is necessary and reasonable in the context of a remote meeting.
2. Licensing hearings do not take deputations. The applicant / licence holder / parties making representations instead declare their intention to address the Committee beforehand. They will be sent a notice of the hearing as normal and are required to return this by 7pm, 2 working days before the meeting. Where a party has not indicated their intention to speak by this time, they will be presumed to not be addressing the Committee. Reasonable attempts will be made to accommodate those submitting late notifications, but their participation will not be guaranteed.
3. Those parties indicating their intention to attend and speak as per paragraph E2 above will be encouraged to join the meeting remotely and issued with details on how to do this. Parties will ordinarily need to provide an email address in order to join the meeting in this way.
4. Any party wishing to attend and speak, but who cannot participate remotely due to technological reasons, or does not wish to do so, may attend the meeting place to speak in person, subject to any restrictions on numbers required to maintain social distancing
5. In line with the above rules on deputations, it is stressed to applicants / licence holders/ parties making representations remotely that they must identify a single speaker in accordance with section D12 above. This may be themselves or another nominated person. They may invite others to speak as part of their submissions, but the sub-committee or panel will not adjourn the meeting for a speaker who is not the identified single speaker for the party unless the Chair is persuaded that that the non-lead speaker has material information to impart to the sub-committee or panel.

## **F. Confidential/Exempt Items**

1. Should the meeting have confidential or exempt items on the agenda, the Chair will move the usual motion to move into private session.
2. The meeting shall then stand adjourned until the Chair is satisfied upon the advisement of the committee officer that the public live feed has paused and all remote participants not eligible to remain in this part of the meeting have been removed from the Teams call.
3. When resolving to move back into public session, the meeting shall again adjourn until the Chair is satisfied, upon the advisement of the committee officer, that the

public live feed has resumed and all eligible remote participants have had their audio / video feeds restored satisfactorily.

## **G. Equalities**

1. It is recognised that that some persons who ordinarily would be able to participate in Council meetings in person will not be able to participate in remote meetings due to physical or other disability or because they lack the technological capability to do so, and others may not wish to participate remotely. To this end, and to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Access to Information Act) 1985 that the press and public have the right to attend committee and sub-committee meeting, the press and public will be physically admitted up to a safe limit at which social distancing can be maintained.
2. Where there is the functionality to dial into a meeting instead of joining via the Internet, the Council will support this as far as possible in line with the procedures set out above.
3. Teams has live captions functionality for remote meetings for the deaf / hard of hearing, which users can independently turn on; guidance on how to do so will be provided. The Council cannot accept any liability for the accuracy of these live captions.
4. The Council will consider any other requests for reasonable adjustments to be made in order to allow parties to be involved in remote Council meetings as far as circumstances at the time of the meeting allows.
5. In addition the Council will review and monitor the operation of its hybrid decision making and make adjustments when it considers it can further mitigate any adverse impact.

**ENDS**