
Guidelines for Participation in Remote-Hybrid Council Meetings

The COVID-19 Pandemic necessitated Council meetings to be held by remote video conferencing for Health & Safety reasons. New legislation has since given effect that allows local authorities to hold remote or hybrid meetings and for such meetings to have the same status in law as meetings held in a physical space (see circular LG 07/2020 for more information). All decisions or votes taken by elected members at such meetings (whether physically or remotely present) shall have the same status in law as decisions or votes taken at a physical meeting.

As we have moved beyond the emergency phase of the pandemic Council meetings are once again being held in a physical format with the option of members joining remotely for hybrid meetings. Some Committees have chosen to remain fully online e.g. Protocol Committee and Women's Committee.

This report seeks to update the "Guidelines for Remote Video Conferencing of Council Meetings" which were approved by the Protocol Committee at its meeting on 7th May 2020. The amended guidelines reflect the knowledge and experience that has been gained during the operation of remote and hybrid meetings during the course of the last two years.

If these guidelines are agreed by the Protocol Committee they shall be incorporated into Standing Orders and submitted for the approval of Council.

Ruth Dowling
Senior Executive Officer
7th September 2022

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In order to ensure that all meetings are effective and all members can participate fully it is essential that the following guidelines are observed.

Software & Technical:

- 1) Zoom Video Conferencing will be used for all Council Committees (remote and hybrid).
- 2) Locate your device as close as possible to the wi-fi router to ensure the strongest signal and connection speed. It may be necessary to use a wired connection if your wi-fi connection is not adequate.
- 3) You may need to consider the number of people who are using the wifi at the same time as you in your house, this will effect the speed of connection.
- 4) If you experience connection issues turn off your camera and use the audio only.
- 5) For Monthly Council Meetings, Special Meetings and Budget Meetings all attendees (remote and physical) must log into Modern.Gov to reister attendance and vote.

Etiquette for Remote-Hybrid Meetings:

- 1) The Chair and meeting administrator should log on **15 minutes** prior to the meeting commences to ensure that the system is operating correctly.
- 2) Participants should log on **10 minutes** prior to the meeting start time to ensure their system is working correctly.
- 3) At the beginning of the meeting the Chair/Administrator should conduct a roll call attendance and any guests should be introduced.
- 4) Participants should ensure that their microphone is on mute until they are called upon to speak by the Chair.
- 5) Participants should use the "raise hand" feature to indicate that they wish to speak.
- 6) When called by the Chair to speak, participants should unmute themselves and ensure their camera is on. Participants should keep their cameras on for the duration of the meeting as much as possible.
- 7) When addressing the meeting, participants should speak clearly and at a level and tone necessary to be heard by the other meeting participants. (This may be higher than ones normal speaking voice.) Always speak directly into the microphone and refrain from head movements that would distort or impair the sound quality. The use of a headset is advised and Members can order through the Chief Executive's Department.
- 8) Participants are advised to use an appropriate headset if the audio systems on their device are not of sufficient quality.
- 9) Participants should lower their hand and mute their microphones once they have finished speaking, this will ensure that any private conversations are not overheard within the meeting and webcast.

- 10) The Chair may mute a participant if the contribution is inappropriate or the Councillors is exceeding time allocation.
- 11) Participants should ensure that their Zoom profile photo is appropriate and that they are correctly / appropriately named i.e. Councillor First Name Second Name.
- 12) Participants should be located in a quiet area, where there will be no interruptions/distractions. It is not appropriate to have non-participants in view of the camera, especially young children.
- 13) Consideration should be given to turning off your video if taking a break for refreshments/ food.
- 14) Where possible use a plain wall as background and avoid having a window in the background. Branded images of Dublin City backgrounds are available for use.
- 15) Refrain from displaying any overtly political or potentially offensive material in your background. If appropriate, blur your background by selecting the appropriate option in the Zoom settings.
- 16) The chat function is disabled for Council meetings as it is visible on the webcast.
- 17) Members should be aware that hybrid and remote meetings are webcast and therefore are considered a public meeting. Elected Members do not have parliamentary privilege so it is important to consider if a contribution could be considered libellous or a breach of GDPR.