



From mountain to sea

# **Scheme of Governance**

## **Part 4G - Guidance on use of Skype for Business at Council Meetings**

28 September, 2018



## Contents

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<b>GUIDANCE ON USE OF SKYPE FOR BUSINESS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS</b>	<b>2</b>
1. Introduction	2
2. Standing Orders	2
3. Chairing Meetings and Quorum	2
4. Prior to the Meeting	2
5. At the Meeting	3
6. Quasi-Judicial and Regulatory Matters including Planning	4
7. Confidential and Exempt Items	5

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## **GUIDANCE ON USE OF SKYPE FOR BUSINESS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The following guide sets out the recommended procedures for remote participation at Full Council and Committee meetings.

### **1. Introduction**

Members should always seek to attend Full Council and Committee meetings in person. However, it is recognised that there will be occasions where this is not possible. In these circumstances members should first seek to appoint a substitute member (other than for Area Committees and Full Council) to attend in their place. If a substitute cannot be found Members may in exceptional circumstances request to join remotely using the following guide.

### **2. Standing Orders**

Standing Order 5.1.8 states that “the Chair may, by exception, allow any Member to participate and vote in a Meeting although not actually present at the location where the Meeting is being held whether by way of teleconference, video conference or otherwise.” Therefore, the Chair must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which would merit a Member joining a meeting remotely.

### **3. Chairing Meetings and Quorum**

Members participating remotely will be included when calculating the quorum of the meeting. Accordingly, there will not require to be a quorum of Members physically present at the meeting venue.

However, the Elected Member chairing the meeting must be physically present at the meeting venue. Accordingly, should the appointed Chair of the Committee wish to attend the meeting remotely the Vice Chair or, if the Vice Chair is not physically present, a Chair appointed by the members present would preside.

### **4. Prior to the Meeting**

Any Member wishing to participate remotely should where possible send a request by email to the Committee Officer for the relevant Committee at the earliest opportunity to allow sufficient time to consult with the Chair and, where remote attendance is agreed, organise any requirements. Members should be aware that

when requesting remote attendance, a minimum of 4 working hours' notice is required as facilities may not be readily available.

- 4.1 (a) The Chair will make a decision in accordance with Standing Order 5.1.8 and with consideration to equality, accessibility and inclusiveness in relation to joining Council meetings. The Chair will have regard to the facilities available.
- (b) If technology equipment is required, the Committee Officer will contact Aberdeenshire Council's ICT Service Desk.
- (c) If the meeting room requires adjustments in how it is to be set up the Committee Officer will contact the Property and Facilities Team.
- 4.2 The Committee Officer, on behalf of the Chair, will provide confirmation to the Member(s), on whether the request has been authorised at the earliest opportunity.
- (a) Should authorisation not be given an explanation will be provided to the Member(s).
- (b) Where authorisation has been provided the Committee Officer will send a Skype meeting invite via Outlook to the Member(s) for joining the meeting.
- 4.3 Time permitting, a test may be conducted before the meeting start time with the Member(s) joining who wish to participate remotely. This will be via a Skype invite in advance of the meeting. The Member(s) should ensure they are available for the test otherwise any connection issues may not be identified ahead of the meeting.
- 4.4 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 the Member(s) joining remotely.

## **5. At the Meeting**

- 5.1 The Chair will confirm at the beginning if any Member(s) are joining remotely and that he/she can see and hear all Member(s) participating remotely. The Committee Officer will confirm the names of those in attendance at the meeting.
- (a) Member(s) joining remotely should activate their video functionality. The Chair may in exceptional circumstances to authorise in advance of the meeting a Member taking part by audio access via a telephone line.

- 5.2 Member(s) joining remotely will be required to be in a quiet private location and will be asked to confirm this at the start of the meeting. Members will also be informed that when not speaking their microphones must be muted.
- 5.3 If a recording of the meeting is required all Members attending the Meeting must be notified and agree to the recording in accordance with Standing Order 6.1.2.
- (a) Skype has the feature and functionality to record audio and video. Any Member joining remotely who seeks to record the meeting without permission from the Chair and the other Members attending the Meeting would be in breach of Principle 1 of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 5.4 Should a Member joining a Committee meeting remotely 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 can continue with the business and the remote Member would be deemed to have left the Meeting at the time the connection failed.
- 5.5 A remote Member(s) participating in a vote will cast his/her vote as if participating in a roll call vote.
- 5.6 As noted above, Member(s) participating remotely should ensure that their microphone is on mute until such time as they are invited to speak by the Chair. The Member can alert the Committee Officer by Skype message if they wish to speak at any point and the Committee Officer shall notify the Chair of the request. Alternatively, the Member can verbally indicate their wish to speak if possible. For the avoidance of doubt, it would be prudent for the Chair to check with any Member participating remotely if they wish to speak during an item.
- 5.7 A remote Member(s) who has declared an interest in an item and withdrawn must pause the Skype link whilst the item is being considered. An instant message via Skype will be sent to the Member to advise 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-Committees and the Licensing Boards.

- 6.2 Member(s) attending remotely at meetings where quasi-judicial and regulatory matters are being considered will not be permitted to participate by audio and must be in a position to use the Skype video 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 with the Member attending remotely via the Skype Present Screen function.
- 6.4 Any additional papers submitted at the meeting and accepted by the Committee must be provided to the remote Member. The Chair may agree to adjourn the meeting for a short period to facilitate this and to give time for Members to consider the new information.
- 6.5 The Chair must confirm with the remote Member(s) that the Member(s) is/are satisfied that they have received the same information as those Members physically present and feel able to participate in the determination of the application. If a 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 exempt items, the Chair will identify the Member(s) via the video functionality.
- 7.2 The Member(s) joining remotely must confirm that they are in a secure private location and that there are no other persons present in the room.