

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL- PROTOCOL FOR HYBRID MEETINGS

A. Introduction

- 1. On 24 June 2021 the Council approved a report setting out the arrangements for the introduction of Council and Board meetings which allowed some elected members to be present at a meeting in the Council Chamber and others to access the same meeting remotely. These are referred to as “hybrid meetings” for the purposes of this document.**
- 2. The same report approved by Council authorised the Head of Corporate Governance to put in place protocols for the proper conduct of hybrid meetings in consultation with the Group and Party Leaders.**
- 3. This document is the protocol for the conduct of hybrid meetings for the purposes of the Council authorisation. The protocol is supplemental to the Council’s procedural standing Orders, which will continue to apply to Council and Board meetings except to the extent that they are inconsistent with the terms of this protocol.**

B. Background

- 1. There have been no Board meetings held in the Council Chamber at Renfrewshire House since March 2020. Instead, meetings have taken place remotely, most recently using the Microsoft Teams platform.**
- 2. The gradual easing of Government restrictions relating to the control of the Covid-19 pandemic has now made it possible for elected members to return to Renfrewshire House to attend Board meetings although that return is subject to whatever Government guidance is in place at the date of each Board or Council meeting.**
- 3. The arrangements set out in this Protocol are based on applying a physical distance requirement of at least 2 metres. This requirement restricts the number of people who are able to be present in the Council chamber for each meeting.**
- 4. The maximum number of people who may be present in the Council Chamber is determined by the number of available seats taking into account the physical distancing requirements.**

5. The maximum number is currently 26. This comprises the following:
 - 18 seats with microphones
 - 3 seats for clerks (no microphones)
 - 5 seats in the public gallery (no microphones).
6. The number of elected members on the Leadership Board and on three of the four policy boards is 15.
7. The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board has 9 members and the Regulatory Functions Board has 10 members. There are various other Boards and sub-committees, none of which have a membership in excess of 15.
8. Therefore, all elected members on those Boards should be able to attend meetings in Renfrewshire House.
9. The only exceptions to this overall position are the Full Council meetings where 43 members would require to be present and the Education and Children's Services Policy Board where there are 20 members including 3 representatives of religious groups.
10. For Full Council meetings and meetings of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board at least some of the members will have to attend remotely.
11. It is also the case that most officers attending Board and Council meetings which are being held in the Council Chamber will continue to do so remotely. The Chair may wish to discuss with the chief executive or relevant director if they wish to have certain senior officer (s) present in the Council Chamber.

C. Prior to the Meeting

1. The Notice calling the meeting will specify that the meeting will be webcast live and that elected members will in some circumstances be able to attend the meeting in person in the Council Chamber while others will be able to access the meeting remotely.
2. The Chair must be present in the Chamber. If the Chair is unable to attend the meeting, the Vice-Chair must be present in the Chamber.
3. Members should provide at least 24 hours' notice to the Head of Corporate Governance that they intend attending the meeting remotely, unless this is unavoidable for circumstances outwith their control.

4. All members with the exception of the Chair will be invited as “attendees”.
5. All members (other than the Chair) attending a meeting in the Chambers should bring their own laptop with them to allow them to access emails. This will enable them to see any amendments circulated at the meeting. Members should ensure their laptop is fully charged before attending the meeting.
6. To prevent disruptive feedback noise, member will require to have their microphones and speakers on their laptops turned off.
7. The Chair will have a laptop provided and this will be set up in advance of the meeting.
8. The Chair’s laptop will provide the Chair with access to the on-line meeting attendees list, a view of the on-line screen and the private chat function.
9. In addition to Committee Services staff operating the Public-I system, each meeting will be supported by two committee services clerks. The duties of Clerk 1 are to advise the convener, conduct any votes and be alert to any member who wishes to speak. The duties of Clerk 2 are principally to support the convener in relation to those members and officers accessing the meeting remotely. They will alert the convener to any member accessing the meeting remotely who wishes to speak. Clerk 2 will also be responsible for circulating any amendments to be considered at the meeting.
10. Members are encouraged to send any amendments they propose to make to the Committee Services officer assisting with the circulation of amendments whose email address will be communicated to the members attending the meeting. Ideally, the amendments should be passed to Committee Services in advance of the meeting.
11. Members attending the meeting in the Chamber will be allocated one of the available seats in the Chamber and the member must sit at the seat allocated to them.
12. The Convener has the power to determine whether any meeting of a Board or Full Council should be conducted remotely using the Teams platform.

13. The Chair may wish to consider whether any particular senior officers should be present in the Council Chamber for a meeting. They should discuss a requirement for an officer to attend with the chief executive or the relevant director.
14. The committee rooms are available for Groups to use immediately prior to a Board meeting or during any adjournment.

D. At the Start of the Meeting

1. The Chair will announce that the meeting will be broadcast live.
2. The Chair will also establish how many members are present in the Chamber and how many members are accessing the meeting remotely.
3. The Chair will also establish and state which officers (other than the officers operating the system) are present in the Chamber.

E. During the Meeting

1. Members must comply with any advice in place regarding Covid-19 to protect the health and safety of those attending or supporting the meeting.
2. Members present in the Chamber must activate their microphones when speaking. Failing to do so will mean that their contribution will not be picked up on the webcast and those attending the meeting remotely will not be able to hear what is being said.
3. All motions and amendments intimated during the meeting should be by email although the Chair may instruct that a motion or amendment is set out in the on-line meeting chat. The Chair may also request that the proposer of any motion or amendment reads their motion or amendment out for the purpose of informing those watching the meeting remotely.
4. Hard copy motions or amendments should not be circulated in the Chamber unless all members attending the meeting are present in the Chamber.

F. Contingency

- 1. Where it was intended to use the Public-I system for a meeting but for any reason it is not possible to use that system, the meeting will be adjourned until such time as the Chair may decide to enable a Teams meeting to be set up. Once reconvened, the meeting shall then proceed as a remote meeting on the Teams platform and the procedures for holding a meeting using Teams shall apply.**