



Henry Chadwick Protocol for virtual LGB meetings

The COVID-19 crisis has required many of us to use unfamiliar technologies for the first time so that we can continue to work from home, communicate and meet with colleagues and clients. For most governing boards it will also be the first time they have had to consider holding virtual meetings. The key point here is that with a small amount of preparation it is relatively easy to provide an alternative to meeting face-to-face. Once governors and trustees realise how easy and efficient the alternatives are, it may be that this will have a profound and positive effect on how business is conducted in the future.

(NGA Governing in challenging circumstances)

NGA recommends that governing boards arrange virtual meetings by telephone, video conference or through an online platform, rather than conducting business and voting by email correspondence. The exchange of numerous emails lacks immediacy, restricts the opportunity for the governing board to interact in real time, can result in some governors/trustees losing track of others' contributions, and can make recording problematic for the clerk/governance professional. All governing boards should refer to their clerk for advice. The government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing and the Department for Education has advised that during this isolation period governing boards can agree to hold meetings via telephone or video-conferencing without having to meet first. The Chair or clerk can contact governors directly to agree to alternative meeting arrangements.

Protocol for virtual meetings

Protocol to be followed when using alternative arrangements to participate and vote in meetings of the governing board.

The protocol that applies to governors using alternative arrangements to participate and vote in meetings.

Where the LGB has approved and has in place alternative arrangements for governors to participate and vote in meetings (e.g. by telephone or video conference) and a governor/trustee wishes to use these alternative arrangements they should:

- restrict themselves to using the arrangements agreed by the LGB;
- inform the clerk to the governing board that this is their intention as soon as possible but no later than 72 hours before the meeting is due to take place (subject to the meeting being convened giving the normal notice period);
- communicate and co-operate with the clerk to the LGB as necessary to ensure that the alternative arrangements can be put in place and work well for all concerned, and
- abide by the normal rules, procedures and code of conduct adopted by the governing board and give particular regard to the duty to maintain confidentiality.

The protocol that applies to the LGB when using alternative arrangements to hold their meetings

Where the governing board decides that a meeting should take place using alternative arrangements (e.g. by telephone or video conference) that have been previously agreed then following will apply:

- the usual (statutory) notice and arrangements for issuing papers except where the chair has exercised their right to waive the usual notice;
- all participants to receive clear instructions regarding how to access the meeting including where they can access support if they experience difficulty;
- all participants will note and follow any instructions given on how to manage their participation at the meeting. For example confirming attendance, speaking through the chair of the meeting, voting on matters etc;
- the governing board will abide by their normal rules, procedures and code of conduct adopted by the governing board and give particular regard to the duty to maintain confidentiality;
- governors will contribute towards a safe and secure environment for the meeting by giving due regard to the school's policies relating to data protection and the appropriate use of ICT, and

- the minutes of the meeting will be taken by the clerk to the governing board and the meeting should not be recorded by any governor/trustee or the clerk without the approval of the governing board and for a specified purpose.

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