

# Guidance for Community Council meetings

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## Background

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- 1.1. In August 2021, the Council agreed that physical meetings of executive committees, and the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, would be reinstated from October 2021, on the basis of a hybrid model. Hybrid meetings are meetings where some participants are physically in the room and others join remotely.
- 1.2. Following this decision by the Council it was agreed that guidance would be provided to Community Councils in relation to points to consider if choosing to organise and host physical or hybrid meetings of your Community Council.
- 1.3. Community Councils are advised that at this stage physical, virtual and hybrid meetings are permitted. The most appropriate type of meeting will be different for each Community Council and will be based upon technical skills of members, meeting venue availability and suitability and unique individual circumstances.
- 1.4. The guidance provided here is based on the information and support supplied from the Scottish Government [here](#) (which may be updated from time to time) and the Council's procedures for holding hybrid committee meetings. It is designed to assist your Community Council consider potential issues that may arise from deciding to return to physical or hybrid meetings.

## Hybrid or Physical Meeting Guidance

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- 2.1. You should firstly determine if you wish to simply return to holding physical meetings, or if you wish to hold hybrid meetings. If holding a hybrid meeting then individuals can either attend in person or by virtual means. This decision will identify the issues you will need to consider before resuming meetings where the public are attending in person.
- 2.2. If you choose to hold physical or hybrid meetings under the Council's Scheme for Community Councils, then members of the public are entitled to attend in person. You should therefore consider the size and nature of your meeting venue and review the information on how to reduce the risk for your attendees which is provide by the Scottish Government [here](#). This will include increasing ventilation by opening windows, using hand sanitising gel or similar that local venues may provide to maintain hand hygiene, wearing face coverings and seeking to ensure attendees keep a safe distance from people who aren't in the same household.

- 2.3. If you wish to host a hybrid meeting you will need to determine how, and most importantly can, you webcast the meeting from your venue? You will also need to consider how the meeting will be run procedurally, what software you will choose to use and how you will set up the meeting room so that the participants who are present can be seen by the web camera(s) and heard by the microphone(s). A decision to host a hybrid meeting should only be taken if you are confident you can navigate the many technical complexities of doing so.
- 2.4. If you are organising a hybrid meeting you can still choose to encourage members of the public and press to attend remotely. However, they should still be permitted to attend in person subject to physical distancing and other health and safety requirements.
- 2.5. Attendance at the meeting should be recorded as it may be necessary for government contact tracing initiatives. A simple process would be for you to consider requiring the Secretary to take a register of Community Councillors in attendance by roll call at the start of the meeting. This will also demonstrate to the public who is in attendance and check there are no sound issues if the meeting is hybrid. The Secretary should also take a register of members of the public present at the meeting and their contact details.
- 2.6. In organising the meeting, the Community Council should determine if the facility has any organisational requirements and consider if a seating plan would be appropriate to further protect attendees.
- 2.7. [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) \(Requirements\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#) sets out the requirements for face coverings in law. You should also review the Scottish Government guidance on where and when the wearing of face coverings is required, available [here](#). Please also check the guidance from the Scottish Government [here](#) as to when it is not required to wear a face mask when indoors. It is very likely that your venue will be on the Scottish Government list confirming that it is required to wear face coverings indoors unless an exemption applies. You should also confirm if the venue you are meeting in has requirements regarding the wearing of face coverings as part of their rental terms and conditions with you. This is so you can confirm to your attendees if they need to wear face coverings when moving around and seated in your meeting venue.
- 2.8. The Community Council should determine whether members and the public should bring their own bottles or cups of water/drinks to the meeting, again to increase the safety of attendees.
- 2.9. **It is highly recommended that the Community Council consider recommending that those attending a meeting in person take a lateral flow test prior to the meeting and should only attend if the test is negative. Further information regarding lateral flow tests is available [here](#)**

## **Virtual Attendance**

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- 3.1 If holding a hybrid meeting, it is recommended that the Community Council consider advising all members and individuals attending remotely to join the

meeting at least 15 minutes before it is due to start to ensure that their internet connection and IT equipment are working effectively.

- 3.2 Your Community Council can determine if you wish to recommend that those joining remotely use headsets/earphones. They will provide a more consistent and reliable sound for all meeting attendees.
- 3.3 Your Community Council can determine if you wish to recommend remote attendees use the cameras on their devices.
- 3.4 Your Community Council should ensure that you have a process for addressing network or IT issue that prevents your members or the public from joining the meeting, or if individuals are disconnected during the meeting. The simplest solution would be to communicate this to the Secretary, by email or a telephone call.
- 3.5 Your Community Council should ensure that there is a process in place to register a vote if a member is disconnected during a vote. The simplest method is to communicate which way they are voting by text message to the Secretary.
- 3.6 Your Community Council should ensure that there is a process for Community Councillors to state they wish to attend a meeting remotely e.g. due to the need to self-isolate. A simple solution would be to contact the Chair and Secretary at least **2 working days** in advance. The Chair and Secretary should consider if they require to have a process for deciding to hold a meeting virtually if a significant number of your Community Councillors request to attend remotely.

## **Communicating with the Convener and speaking at a hybrid meeting**

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- 4.1 In order to prevent a two-tier meeting whereby either those attending virtually or those attending in person are at a disadvantage in terms of opportunities to contribute, it is recommended that members will be invited to speak/contribute in the order that they indicate this to the Chair. If possible. Community Councillors should assist the Chair in keeping track of the order of those wishing to contribute. The simplest mechanism is for those in the room to raise their hand to indicate that they wish to contribute. Those joining virtually should use the Meeting Chat function, as per your previous arrangements eg. labelling messages 'question', 'contribution', 'response', 'amendment', etc. It is recommended that the chat function should only be used for this purpose. Remember that the chat box and text may be visible to all participants.
- 4.2 If holding a hybrid meeting then it is recommended that the Secretary take a vote by roll call. The Secretary will summarise any motions and amendments and will then ask each Community Councillor if they are voting for the motion or amendment 1, amendment 2, etc. The Secretary will confirm the decision.

## Contact Details

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