

## Virtual AGM Briefing Paper

*“It may be that by postponing your AGM, you are not fulfilling what it says in your governing document. However, we would be understanding and proportionate about that” (oscr.org.uk)*

Do you need to hold your AGM within the next few months? When was your last AGM held? Are you allowed 12 or 15 months between AGM's? What does your constitution say?

### Is it possible for your organisation to hold a successful virtual AGM?

#### Considerations:

- The quality of your broadband connection
- Members' IT abilities
- Do members have access to technology equipment
- Do members have virtual meeting experience if not how could you support them
- Is there willingness to use virtual communication
- How many members are likely to attend (is a quorum achievable)

#### What are the advantages to holding a virtual AGM

- Shorter more focused meetings;
- Potentially larger attendances;
- Alternative means of communication;
- No business interruption;
- Cost savings;
- Time saving i.e. attend from comfort of own home
- Convenient;
- Reaching isolated people due to travel restrictions;
- Feedback from people with hearing problems say virtual meetings are easier for them to listen and follow;
- May become the new normal i.e. board/committee meetings may need to be held virtually.

#### What are the challenges to holding a virtual AGM

- Poor broadband connection;
- Lack of technology/knowledge;
- Could limit member participation;
- Less personal;

- Unfamiliar way of working;
- Missing the social element;
- Ensuring all members' email addresses are up to date
- Potential exclusion of members that do not have email addresses
- Chairperson's skills and confidence to facilitate an online meeting

### **How to chair and record a virtual AGM**

- Ensure the agenda is focused and achievable within the timescales available (Zoom\*= 40 mins)
- When creating the virtual AGM ensure you create a waiting room so that participants must be accepted into the meeting (added security)
- Encourage participants to join 5 minutes before a meeting to enable prompt start
- At the start of a meeting the chair should ask everyone to mute their microphones unless speaking or set the meeting so when people join their mics are automatically muted. (background noise can be a distraction)
- The host of the meeting should be different from the Chair and Secretary, this allows them to focus on the meeting whilst the host allows participants access and also monitors the chat box or hand up if there are any questions.
- The host should open the participants' tab\* to record members present and keep note of who joins late or leaves early. This should be communicated to the chair during the meeting
- The chair should encourage members to use the chat box or hand up in teams or thumbs up in Zoom functions to invite members to speak. \*
- All members should be given every opportunity to participate.
- Where the meeting is being recorded members should be asked to give their permission

*\*see below*

### **Governance Issues**

All governance surrounding the holding of meetings **must adhere** to the organisation's constitution/M & A's such as:

- Advertise your AGM according to the notice period in your constitution.
- Ask members who would like to attend to supply a current email address. Circulate your documents to members by email or post giving plenty of notice. Include agenda, chairperson's/Annual Report, previous year's AGM minutes and Audited/Examined Accounts.
- Send out the meeting link with the documents.
- Ensure minutes are taken and, or, recorded during the virtual meeting, including all proposals, seconding of motions and the result of votes.
- Try to run your virtual meetings in as natural and interactive way as possible to enhance the experience.

## **When Holding a Virtual AGM**

- Choose the software which is most accessible for your organisation/membership to use
- Identify what type of support is required by members to make a virtual meeting happen
- Ensure the chairperson is aware of and can use all the relevant features to enable full participation
- Ask the secretary to alert the chairperson to those who join late or leave early and to ensure they spot those with 'hands up' to ensure they are given an opportunity to speak

## **What software should be used?**

There is a range of widely used software for devices with a camera facility i.e. PC, laptop, Ipad, mobile phone etc. Those that most people are familiar with are:

### **1. Zoom**

- Requires individual download to host meetings
- The free option allows 40 minutes per meeting. This enables a short, focused discussion which for most organisations would be adequate
- The pro version which costs £11.99 per month per host up to a maximum of 9 hosts and up to 100 participants, 24 hrs meeting duration, and cloud recording.
- No zoom accounts are required when joining a meeting as a participant.
- Invitations are easily created by the host (holder of a Zoom account) by sending an email with a link for participants to join.
- Features include video and audio option, a chat box, screen sharing and participants list
- Landline 'phones can be used to dial in where no computer access is possible.
- Zoom meetings can be recorded.

### **2. Microsoft Teams (view up to 9 people on one screen)**

- Requires individual download but the host requires a Microsoft account;
- Invitations are easily created by the host by sending an email with a link for participants to join.
- Meeting can be easily be setup through Microsoft outlook app
- Members can pin main speakers so they are always in view
- Features include video and audio options as well as a chat box and screen sharing
- Teams also have a "hand up" option for participants to ask permission to speak at the meeting.
- Landline 'phones can be used to dial in where no computer access is possible
- Teams meetings can be recorded.

## **Support**

We advise that organisations trial these software options for their board meeting or in an informal setting to familiarise themselves with the way they work before hosting an AGM.

We are happy to facilitate and support your organisation through this process. We can set up a trial meeting to show you how to use the software or attend a board meeting to advise further.

## **Contact**

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