

# Virtual Governance Meetings

## Top tips for effective video conferencing

Su Turner, from Insight to Impact has been using Video Conferencing facilities for some time. With the need for governors to move away from face to face meetings, in the light of Coronavirus, she sets out her top tips for running effective virtual governance meetings.

### Pick a good video conferencing software

There are many on the market. We have used three, as either a participant or as a Clerk; why not explore them to see which is best for you:

- **Zoom**: we used the free version of this, which limits meetings of more than 2 people to 40 minutes; however there is also a paid version;
- **Microsoft Teams** - free for schools;
- **GoTo meetings** - paid for platform, with a free trial period.



All offer different levels of subscription, dependent on your needs.

### Set up a practice session

Not everyone will have used online conferencing, so it will be important to help governors to become familiar with it - practice, practice, practice! We arranged run through sessions.

So now you've decided on the right package, and allowed time for your governors to get to know how to use it. Below we outline some basic considerations, and top tips for effective online video governance meetings based on our experience.

### 1# Don't arrange a video call if something simpler will do

Although the above tools make it easy to hop on a call, sometimes a video meeting isn't necessarily the right approach. Governors need to consider confidentiality and review whether decisions would be better made via email, using permitted delegation or using Chair's Actions.

### #2 Consider confidentiality

There have been reports in the media about the security of some video conferencing systems, and as you know some governor conversations are confidential. After considering #1, if you choose to hold conversations via conferencing, governors need to be reminded about confidentiality, and they should not allow others in earshot to listen in. Consider headphones.

### #3 A good internet / Wifi connection is vital

An important part of any online conference is the video aspect; which needs fast connectivity for it to work well. Poor connection will make for a poor meeting. Poor Wifi? Plug in instead.

### #4 Ensure the Chair, Head and Clerk fully understand the system

The Chair as the facilitator, will help to keep the agenda on track, as in a face to face meeting. They can also control the mute facility and can facilitate Q&As in a manageable way.

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### #5 Set a manageable agenda - keep things concise

As with a face to face meeting, it is good practice to send out the agenda and paperwork at least 7 days in advance. It will be important to keep the agenda to only the items that you need to talk about, so that the time is managed effectively.

### #6 Schedule the meeting and invite governors

Schedule the meeting in the package that you are using. When you have done that it will either invite people at your request, or you can copy the meeting and login details; and send these in advance to governors.

### #7 Be on time.

This one should be standard with any meeting, video or otherwise. However, when you're dialing into a video conference, it's especially important. Lateness causes disruption. Make sure you log in before the scheduled meeting time, you'll be held in a waiting room until the start.

### #8 Mute yourself when not speaking and look into the camera.

Even though you may think you're being quiet, most microphones can pick up minor background noises which can distract other participants. Use the hands-up button or chat facility to ask a question. Also maintain eye contact too by looking into the camera.

### #9 Share documents virtually

Use collaborative tools to share documents and files in real-time. There are many governor sharing portals that you can and may use already; such as Governor Hub, Google, Trust Governor.

### #10 Spare a thought for the Clerk

Most packages have a recording facility that can help with minute taking, however we didn't use this or change our approach. Governors needs to be mindful though to not over-talk and to be succinct.

## Want more help or advice?

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