

Guidance for Remote Council Meetings

Introduction

In order to ensure that the Council can continue to operate effectively, Members have been given access to Zoom on their Council laptops. The following Guidance is intended to assist those using the technology.

This Guidance has been written with particular regard to Remote Council Meetings – ie formal, public, remote meetings of the Council or Executive or Committees (etc) that are being live streamed. Obviously, much of what is written here also relates to less formal meetings, particularly (eg regarding speaking in turn, muting and unmuting) to meetings with a large number of participants, and reference is made below to some differences in procedure between the two.

For general guidance, the Zoom website at ‘Support’ contains help pages and some helpful video tutorials.

This Guidance should be read in conjunction with (a) the Council’s Protocol for Remote Council Meetings, and (b) any technical advice from IT Services.

All references below to “meetings” are to remote Zoom Meetings or Zoom Webinars. Remote public meetings will generally be Zoom Webinars (see the Protocol) whereas informal meetings will usually be Zoom Meetings.

Joining a meeting

Before you join a meeting please take a note of the details at the bottom of the meeting invite – the telephone numbers, the Meeting/Webinar ID and your Participant ID. These will enable you to join or rejoin the meeting by telephone (eg if your internet connection fails) – see below. (These personal ID details are also available in the top left hand corner of the Zoom screen marked ⓘ.)

These details are unique to you (and link to your profile) and must not be shared with anyone else.

When you are invited to join a meeting your Calendar invite will contain a link to the relevant meeting at the relevant time. Click on this link to connect to the meeting. If you seek to join before the Host opens the meeting you will see a holding page which you can just leave open until such time as the Host officially opens the meeting.

If have to join/re-join a meeting by telephone only please see the Protocol regarding the process and ensure that you use a telephone number previously advised to IT/Strategic Support (for security reasons).

Attendees and Panellists

For Zoom Webinars (ie remote public meetings that are webcast via YouTube) there is a distinction between Attendees and Panellists (please see the Protocol for a full explanation) and individuals may join a meeting as an Attendee, be changed to a Panellist and then be changed back to an Attendee, dependent upon the nature of the meeting and the nature of their attendance.

References to Participants include both, but generally Panellists will be viewable by all Participants and, where the meeting is being webcast (eg via YouTube), by the public as well. Attendees will be able to view Panellists but not each other and will not be on the video feed.

Equipment

As you join a meeting there may be different options for different users/kit etc. You may need to identify what camera, audio, etc you are using (eg, if you have headphones plugged in or are using external speakers).

Laptop/PC

There are a number of ways to use different equipment to access meetings. Some of these are:

- The most obvious one is to use your WBC laptop (Dell XPS-13), either in its standard configuration (eg keyboard in front of you), or folded back on itself (eg with an external keyboard and mouse). You can still access meeting papers (etc) whilst remaining in the meeting (more about this below).

- The next option is to use your mobile phone to access Zoom, whilst using your laptop to access meeting papers etc. This may be preferable if your internet Wi-Fi connection is questionable but you have a decent mobile signal.
- Next is using your WBC laptop (and camera) for the meeting, but connecting a second computer screen (or TV as a second screen) via the Omars dock (supplied with your laptop) and a VGA or HDMI cable (nb you can plug your transformer/power cable into the dock so that you power the laptop via the Omars dock at the same time). This way, by choosing 'Extend these displays' via Display in Settings you can have the Zoom meeting on your laptop, but view meeting papers, etc, on the second screen.
- If you have a second laptop or a pc with a webcam, you can use the second laptop/pc to access Zoom and your WBC laptop to access your papers, emails, etc (not possible the other way around due to WBC laptop encryption, unless you restrict yourself to publically available documents on the second laptop/pc).
- Finally, if you have a separate webcam you might instead choose to use this, linked to your WBC laptop, instead of using the laptop camera – you might link the webcam to the laptop via the USB to USB-C adaptor supplied with the laptop, or via the Omars dock (which has USB ports), or via a KVM switch, etc.

Camera

Fundamentally (more about this under *Meeting Etiquette* below) Participants need to be aware how they appear on screen, given that you are visible to the public as well as other Participants.

One thing to note about the camera on your WBC laptop is that it is at the bottom of the screen (below the DELL logo) in normal (eg keyboard in front of you) configuration. So, if you use it that way around - which you may want to do, particularly if you want to be able to type using the keyboard at the same time (but nb comments below about how this appears on screen) - please be aware that everyone gets a particularly good shot of the underside of your chin.

If you are using the laptop camera instead of (eg) a webcam then, to avoid this camera angle you can invert the XPS by folding it back on itself so you have the screen in front of you with the camera at the top (see *Equipment* above). If the screen display is upside down (test this beforehand) try going to settings > display> orientation and ensuring that rotation lock is off. If you want to still be able to type other than using the touch keyboard on the laptop (eg similar to tablet mode) you will need an external keypad (eg Bluetoothed to the laptop).

Another alternative is to leave the laptop up the usual way, but to prop it up (eg on a book or two) so that the camera is more in line with your face. The problem here is that if you leave the laptop in normal configuration (camera at the bottom of the screen) it doesn't matter how high the camera is – if you want to type, your hands will be in shot.

Fundamentally, the higher up the camera is, within reason, the better the image you will get (hence the reference to a webcam under *Equipment* above).

Microphone/speakers

The standard will be to use the inbuilt camera, microphone and speakers on your laptop. Otherwise you might plug in headphones/mic (etc) — if you are using something other than the inbuilt laptop items you may need to change settings in Zoom (bottom left of the screen). In any event, if you are joining a meeting and get a message about 'computer audio', always join with compute audio (and check that the audio setting on your laptop — not the audio setting on Zoom - isn't on mute).

Display

There are different display options found in the icons in the top right hand corner of your screen as you look at it, eg Speaker view (having the person speaking in the main image in the middle of the screen), or Gallery view (having all images the same size across the screen).

Most people's preference when participating in, as opposed to viewing, a meeting is gallery view — this should show everyone in the meeting across the screen, with the person speaking highlighted by a yellow border (nb that the maximum number of images on the Dell XPS is 25, so for 26+ Participants you will have to scroll from page to page, left to right, to see everyone).

Participants and Zoom Group Chat

In order to have the *Participants* and *Zoom Group Chat* fields visible (more about these below), you need to ensure that you aren't in Zoom full screen mode. Start by ensuring that the window that Zoom has opened in is maximised — hold Alt down and key the spacebar, then choose maximise. Next, hover your mouse in the top right of the image screen and you will see either "Enter full screen" or "Exit full screen". Choose "Exit" if displayed or leave alone.

Next, at the bottom of the screen, click on "Participants" and "Chat" — you should now have a vertical bar to the right of the image showing (all or some of) the meeting Participants at the top and Zoom Group Chat below. You can drag the bottom of the Participants field up or down to make the fields bigger or smaller as desired. Do this before the meeting starts so that you can see if you are muted, who wants to speak, etc. Note the mute/unmute keys at the bottom of the Participants field. The raise and lower hand function can be found under the Reactions Tab at the bottom of your screen.

Meeting Etiquette

Video

Whatever equipment you are using, the fundamentals are that in a public meeting Panellists need to see and hear the other Panellists and be seen and heard by them, and be seen and heard by Attendees and/or members of the public viewing the meeting on-line. You may attend a meeting without video (either via Zoom with video off, or via your telephone), but it is clearly better for Members attending a meeting as Panellists to be seen by other Panellists and the viewing public. Please be careful not to obscure your camera with papers or anything else.

Please note that Panellists who do not use video will not be shown as present on the public live stream, although any contribution to the meeting will still be heard.

Dress and Background

Participants are advised to dress appropriately as they would if they were attending a meeting in the Council offices. Since meetings will be live streamed and viewed by the public, Participants should also consider what is visible behind them and whether it might be distracting for those viewing the meeting (and there may be personal items that you do not wish to be visible to the public). Try to be in a quiet room on your own, so that — if you are unmuted — extraneous noise doesn't creep in and you don't find a member of the household suddenly walking into shot (plenty of these videos on YouTube!). As with any meeting, check your mobile is on silent or off and unplug or remove any landline.

Muting

Please see the Protocol regarding the rules for meetings. In a formal meeting the only time that a Member is permitted to unmute and speak without being invited to by the Chairman is to raise a point of order or personal explanation.

If you have a host of people all with their mics live, (a) it can get confusing, and (b) if more than one of you is in the same room a mic can pick up someone else speaking so you get feedback. So it is better to have the mic muted and only make it live when you are speaking. The Chairman may choose to be unmuted for the whole meeting to save having to keep muting/unmuting.

The Host (for formal meetings a member of IT/Strategic Support, for informal meetings probably the Chairman of the meeting) also has the ability to mute and unmute you (and may choose to mute everyone).

There are a number of alternatives to mute/unmute (you will know if you are muted by a microphone symbol with a diagonal bar across it shown in three places – in the bottom left of the Zoom screen (you may need to hover your cursor there to see this), in the bottom left corner of your image in view, and against your name at the top of the Participants list.

Depending on the way you have options set up you may be able to unmute yourself by holding the space bar down (and muting yourself by releasing it). You can also click on the muted symbol - at the bottom of the Zoom screen or against your name in the Participants list - or click unmute at the bottom of the Participants list.

Nb that the Participants list shows who has unmuted mics — if your name is there showing as unmuted and you are not speaking please remember to mute yourself (the Host may mute you if you forget to do so).

Just as important as remembering to mute yourself after you finish speaking is remembering to unmute yourself before starting to speak! Too often Participants are invited to speak but all everyone else can see is them mouthing words – they don't realise they are muted until someone interjects to tell them. We want to avoid this, particularly when we are being viewed by the public, so always know what your mute/unmute status is by looking at whether the microphone symbol against your name in the Participants list has a diagonal bar through it or not.

Wanting to speak — Raising your hand

Please see the Protocol regarding the rules for meetings and indicating that you wish to speak.

In a formal meeting, except for points of order or personal explanation, the Chairman must invite the Member to speak. In order that the Chairman knows who wants to speak, and the Host can give advice as to who is waiting to speak, if you wish to speak you must use Zoom Raise Hand (putting your hand up or waving in vision is not in accordance with the Protocol and will not achieve anything). By keying the “Raise Hand” key, which is located under the Reactions Tab, a hand symbol will appear against your name in the Participants list and your name will go to the top of the list (or towards the top if others raised their hands before you).

Once the Host has advised the Chairman that you want to speak, and the Chairman has invited you by name to speak, unmute yourself, speak, then mute yourself again and key “Lower Hand”. Please note (and see the Protocol) that the Chairman may not take speakers in the strict order they raised their hands. As with muting, the Host may lower your hand if you forget.

Zoom Chat

Sometimes, instead of speaking, you may want to raise a written issue, or text all Participants or a single Participant. Zoom Group Chat in the vertical bar allows you to do this — type in the bottom field. If you choose to use this function, and you don't want to message everyone, please ensure that you select the correct Participant to receive the message.

Accessing papers

If you are using two screens, or separate computers, you will be able to have the Zoom meeting on one screen and meeting papers, etc, on another. If you using your WBC laptop on its own you could print documents off if you have a printer connected, but you can also switch between Zoom and the documents, and continue to listen to the meeting whilst reading papers on screen. Very importantly please realise that your camera is still live – you may not be able to see the Zoom meeting, but the Participants and public can still see you!