

The purpose of virtual business meetings is to give Units due to hold a regular meeting(s) during the suspension of Masonic activity, the opportunity to carry out essential administrative procedures. These meetings may not be held by Units where no regular meeting(s) fall within the period of suspension.

Units whose meeting(s) fall between 17 March 2020 (date the General Suspension started) and 8 June 2020 (date this scheme comes into force) may apply retrospectively to hold a virtual business meeting on a date of their choosing provided 14 days prior notice is given to members. From 8 June 2020, these administrative meetings must be held on, or within 14 days either side of, the date of the regular meeting.

Protocols for Virtual Business Meetings

- All Brethren attending the meeting must be suitably attired in smart casual dress with a collar and tie.
- No alcohol should be present or consumed immediately before, during or after the meeting. If the Unit wishes there to be a social element this may be convened as a separate online session under a different invitation immediately following the end of the meeting's online session.
- No ritual or ceremonial of any sort are to be worked. The opening and closing of the meeting will be by declaration of the Brother occupying the Chair.
- If the Brother occupying the Chair of the Unit is unavoidably absent, the Presiding Officer shall be the next available Brother in accordance with the Constitutions and Regulations, or Statutes, of the Order.
- The Unit Secretary will be responsible for recording the names of those in attendance for inclusion in the Minutes and Unit Attendance Register.
- Items of business that may be included on the Paper of Business (see accompanying template) are:
 - approval of minutes and Accounts
 - election of Worshipful Master (or equivalent); Treasurer; and Tyler
 - change of subscription amount;
 - dispersal of funds for charitable purposes;
 - exclusions and resignations;
 - proposition of candidates/joining/re-joining members;
 - amendments to By-Laws
 - reports of Unit Committee, Treasurer, Almoner, Hall Management representative. etc.
- Please use the term 'Paper of Business' and 'Order of Business' instead of 'Summons' and 'Agenda', to distinguish the document as referring to a meeting held outside of normal circumstances.

Post Meeting Actions

- As soon as convenient after the meeting has taken place, the Provincial Grand Secretary (or equivalent) will notify the Grand Secretary of all Units within his jurisdiction that have held virtual business meetings. This notification must be accompanied by copies of the Papers of Business and any Provincial Dispensations issued, which will be lodged on the Unit Record at Mark Masons' Hall.

VIRTUAL BUSINESS MEETINGS – AIDE MEMOIRE

PROCESS	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>STEP ONE Do you need a virtual business meeting?</p>	Identify items of administrative business held over from meeting(s) not held due to the General Suspension of Masonic Activity. This is likely to include approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting, election of officers, approval of Accounts and approval of the dispersal of charity funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Secretary ▪ Unit Committee ▪ Unit Principal Officers
<p>STEP TWO What paperwork and permissions are needed?</p>	Prepare a draft Paper of Business, using the template provided by Mark Masons’ Hall, for a virtual business meeting. This must be submitted to the Provincial Grand Secretary (or equivalent) together with a request for (i) an exemption from the General Suspension (this will be given by letter not Dispensation); and (ii) a Dispensation Request for permission to meet without the Warrant being present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Secretary ▪ Provincial Grand Secretary (or equivalent)
<p>STEP THREE Who should attend and when should the papers be issued?</p>	Subject to the approvals in Step 2, issue a video conference invitation to all Unit members <u>and the Provincial Executive</u> via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or other recognised platform. The invitation must be sent at least 14 days before the scheduled date of the virtual business meeting and must include a copy of the Paper of Business and any related documents to be discussed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Secretary
<p>STEP FOUR Make sure those not on email are contacted</p>	A copy of the Paper of Business and related documents must, if practical, be sent to all Unit members not on email. The same should be invited to notify the Unit Secretary of their views and voting intentions so that these may be recorded and notified to the Members attending the virtual business meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Secretary
<p>STEP FIVE Who chairs the meeting</p>	The Brother occupying the Chair of the Unit will preside at the virtual business meeting and is responsible for ensuring that enough Members join the call to make it quorate in accordance with the Constitutions & Regulations of the Order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Presiding Officer
<p>STEP SIX What can be discussed?</p>	Provided a quorate number attend, the Brother occupying the Chair will declare the meeting open and proceed to deal with the business. If not, the meeting must be abandoned. The Unit Secretary will take Minutes. Only items appearing on the Paper of Business may be transacted. Elections usually decided by ballot may be resolved by a show of hands if all present agree otherwise the matter must be deferred to the next physical meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Presiding Officer ▪ Unit Secretary
<p>STEP SEVEN Meeting closed</p>	On completion of the business, the Brother occupying the Chair will declare the meeting closed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unit Presiding Officer