

Draft – Protocol for Meetings of the ACCESS Joint Committee held under SI 2020 392

General

1. Specific provision is made for the holding virtual meetings, where permitted by law, under s15 of Schedule Three (Constitution of the Joint Committee).
2. The Constitution of the Joint Committee as set out in Schedule Three of the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) shall continue to apply for all virtual meetings except where there is a requirement, implied or otherwise, for Members to be physically present in the same location.
3. These Protocols supplement but do not replace the Constitution in the IAA and exist to make meetings held under SI 2020 392 more effective and efficient.
4. Reference to Chair or Clerk relate to the Chair or Clerk of the specific virtual meeting.
5. Members are respectfully reminded to ensure that the electronic device through which they are attending the virtual meeting has sufficient battery charge.

Rules of Conduct

6. The Chair's ruling on the meaning or application of these Protocols or any other aspect of the proceedings of a meeting held virtually cannot be challenged.
7. The Chair may give any direction, or vary these Protocols, when they consider it appropriate to do so in order to allow for the effective and democratic management of the meeting but must take advice from the Clerk before so doing.
8. Unless directed otherwise, immediately before the commencement of the virtual meeting, all participants must switch the video and microphone settings to "off" and only turn them on when invited to speak by the Chair.
9. Members are reminded that any member of the public may observe the meeting.
10. The conversation function referred to in the Protocols is also known as the 'meeting chat'. Members should proceed as if the content can be viewed by participants and the wider public and only use the function for procedural matters as set out below. It should not be used to discuss the substantive issue – this should be done verbally.

Attendance

11. Members must affirm their presence by typing the word 'Present' in the conversation function of the meeting. This shall be accepted by the Clerk as the equivalent of the Member having signed the attendance list.
12. Where a Member is leaving the meeting permanently or temporarily, the word 'Absent' shall be typed in the conversation function. Where the Member joins the meeting once more, 'Present' shall be typed once more.

13. Where a Member has declared a DPI or other interest which means they need to absent themselves for part of the meeting, the Member shall leave the meeting completely at the appropriate time. The Clerk shall email the Member when they are able to re-join. The Clerk will confirm the absence by checking the meeting attendees and confirming the same to the Chair.
14. The quorum of the ACCESS Joint Committee is 8 voting Members and this applies to virtual meetings. At least 8 Members must have indicated they are 'Present' for the meeting to commence or continue. The Clerk will conduct electronic checks on quoracy periodically throughout the meeting.

Substitutes

15. In order to ensure that Members have access to the virtual meeting, it is requested that formal notification of substitutes to the Clerk be made at least 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting. The start time of the meeting will be affected if this is not done.

Speaking

16. Members and other participants in the meeting must wait to be called on by the Chair before speaking.
17. Attendees may indicate a desire to speak through use of the conversation function. The Clerk will ensure these are brought to the attention of the Chair in the order received.
18. Where the functionality is available, the Chair may permit the raising of virtual hands via the meeting platform to indicate a desire to speak and the Clerk will assist in bringing these to the attention of the Chair in the order they are raised.
19. Where Members do not have access to the 'chat' or 'hand raising' functionality for technical or accessibility reasons, they are asked to bring this to the attention of the Clerk prior to the meeting if possible. When this arises, the Chair will periodically ask any Members who have not been able to indicate virtually, whether they wish to speak.
20. Members not part of the Committee wishing to speak shall request permission from the Chair in advance so that the Clerk is informed 24-hours ahead of the meeting.

Motions and Amendments

21. Except where the motion before the Committee is set out in the Agenda, any Member is entitled to request that a motion or amendment before the Committee be typed out in the conversation function by the proposer. Where this is done, the Clerk shall read out the motion/amendment.
22. All proposed motions/amendments will need to be seconded by a Committee Member present in line with usual practice.
23. The Chair shall ask for Members' views on the motion/amendment. Where the view of the Committee is unclear, the Chair shall call for a vote.

Voting

24. Resolutions of the Joint Committee will normally be reached via general agreement to be confirmed by the Chair asking if any Members disagree with the motion at hand. Where no objections are made the Clerk will confirm that Chair may accept the Committee's general agreement and record the resolution accordingly.
25. Where an objection is raised or it is already apparent from the debate that general agreement is unlikely, the Chair will either ask the Clerk to conduct a rollcall of all Members in alphabetical order or ask Members to indicate via the meeting chat function whether they are for, against or abstaining – no response shall be taken as an abstention. The Clerk will verbally confirm the result of the vote and record the resolution accordingly.
26. The Chair will indicate which of the above methods of confirming votes is intended for use at the start of the meeting.
27. No votes shall be recorded in the Minutes unless section 20.4 of the Constitution applies.

Clerking

28. The Clerk to the Committee, as defined in the IAA and these Protocols, will take the minutes and provide procedural and governance support to the Chair and the Committee. Technical assistance in the running of the virtual meeting will be provided by additional officers, not necessarily from the Clerking authority.

Other Provisions

29. Where the minimum legal requirements apply and Members are only able to hear each other and be heard, the Chair shall be responsible for identifying speakers etc., and will be supported in this by the Clerk as facilitator. A rollcall shall be held at the start of the meeting, and at other times as deemed necessary by the Chair, to establish quoracy in these circumstances.

Part Two Meetings

30. At the start of any formal meeting, or part of any formal meeting, from which the press and public have been excluded, Members must type 'Present - Alone' to verify that no unauthorised person is able to hear, see, or otherwise participate in the meeting.
31. A Part Two meeting will normally be anticipated and will be scheduled in advance as a separate virtual meeting. Where the need to move into a Part Two meeting only becomes apparent during the meeting, unless it is the last item due for consideration before moving into a planned Part Two session, discussion of the relevant item should be adjourned and deferred until later in the meeting.