



**Standard Operating Guidance
Attendance at Council Meetings by Elected Members & Council Officials / Others
(Media & Public) and attendance at other meetings or Council Buildings.**

Date: 25th September 2020

Version: 1.0

Potential Hazards

- Contamination with COVID-19 virus.
- Spread of COVID-19 virus.
- Coming into contact with someone who has the virus and is coughing and sneezing. Close contact includes face to face contact; spending more than 15 minutes within two metres of an infected person or living with an infected person.
- Touching surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on.
- Inability to maintain physical distancing requirements in line with public health advice
- Contact with bodily fluids.

COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Procedures



Pre-Meeting Considerations

- Maximum occupancy and seating capacities to be assessed to ensure the recommended physical distancing of 2m can be achieved for meeting venue.
- Capacity will depend on the venue and the ability to physically distance and ensure other protective measures are in place. Availability and capacity of public gallery should be considered.
- The overall numbers at any one time within the meeting facility should be in accordance with the Government’s Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19, which can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/resilience-recovery-2020-2021-plan-for-living-with-covid-19/>

- Venue size and seating capacity will dictate the number of media, and public (if any) in attendance.
- If meeting is being hosted in an external venue check local guidelines in place.
- Ensure welfare facilities / hand sanitiser / wipes available at or adjacent to the meeting room.
- COVID-19 Self Declaration form to be sent electronically to all attendees in advance of meeting.
- On the day of the meeting and prior to the meeting, all attendees to complete COVID Self Declaration Form to determine the following questions (*if the answer to any one or more of the questions is Yes – that person should not attend the meeting*).
 1. Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness, flu like symptoms or loss or change to your sense of smell or taste now or in the past 14 days?
 2. Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?
 3. Are you a close contact of a person who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (less than two metres for more than 15 minutes accumulative in one day)?
 4. Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?
 5. Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?
 6. Have you returned into Ireland from a non-green list country in the last 14 days?
- COVID-19 Self Declaration Form to be returned to the Meeting Administrator prior to the meeting.
- Ensure attendees are advised that they must not attend the meeting if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or feel unwell (or suspect they have been exposed to COVID-19).
- Ensure a response plan is prepared, in line with the Government's Return to Work Safely Protocol, in the event that someone at the meeting becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Vulnerable or those who the HSE categorise as being very high risk may be facilitated to access the meeting remotely if they so request, however they must be advised that they will have not have voting rights if accessing meeting remotely.

Meeting Room Considerations

- Ensure adequate welfare facilities / hand sanitiser / wipes available at or adjacent to the meeting room.
- Display COVID-19 posters prominently.
- Ensure cleaning schedule in place.
- Ensure meeting room is set up to facilitate 2m physical distancing.
- Provide one-way systems for access/egress routes where practicable.
- Keep meeting rooms well ventilated during use ideally through open windows.
- No tea/ coffees or food.
- No roaming mics.



At the Meeting

- Wash/sanitise hands before going into the meeting.
- Attendees should access the meeting room at the designated time and not earlier.
- Attendees to adhere to the 2m physical distancing and follow the public health advice in relation to hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Access to the meeting room should be controlled with only those on the attendance list permitted access.
- A record of attendees and contact details must be kept for contact tracing purposes. Use of own pen for sign in or alternatively one person to record contact details.
- Attendees to be encouraged to bring minimal personal belongings into the meeting room to avoid risk of contamination.
- Chair must inform all attendees at the start of the meeting the COVID-19 control measures in place.
- Ensure attendees are aware of the response plan in place in the event that someone at the meeting becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms.
- It is recommended that a face covering is worn on entering and leaving the building and until attendee enters seat.
- No congregation in the building before or after the meeting.
- Meeting of members in venue before or after meeting to be actively discouraged.
- Strictly **no** Hand Shaking (or any physical contact).
- Aim to keep hardcopy document handling to the absolute minimum, use of electronic means as an alternative, where possible.
- Reflecting best practice, time of attendance at meeting to be kept to a minimum and within a recommended maximum of 1 hour 55 minutes. Chair to outline at the start and advise of meeting finish time.
- Standing orders may need to be amended to accommodate these new time restrictions.
- Chair to consider allocation of time to agenda items to get through the agenda in the allotted time and to advise the members in advance.
- It is recommended that the Chair and members give consideration to the effective and efficient management of Motion of Motions e.g.:
 - Only the Proposer and the Seconder to speak to a Notice of Motion.
 - If the Proposer is happy with the written reply, the matter is then concluded and move on.
 - Written replies by the Executive to Notice of Motions to be shared with all Members at commencement of meeting preferably by electronic means.

Attendance at Council Buildings

- Attendance at Council buildings should only be for essential business reasons. Technological alternatives (email, phone or video conferencing) to be used as much as possible.
- If attending Council buildings, it should be by pre-arranged appointment if possible and Council Officials should make every effort to accommodate Elected Members in this regard.
- If attending at Council buildings Elected Members should limit their movements.
- Elected members should avoid contact with any Council employees other than those directly related to their visit.
- It is recommended that a face covering is worn when moving through Council buildings.
- Elected Members attendance at Council buildings and interactions with staff should be recorded for contact tracing purposes, as required.



- Adhere to public health advice in relation to hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Maintain a 2m distance with interactions with employees or members of the public
- Keep durations of interactions to a minimum.

Monitoring of Arrangements

- Covid-19 arrangements on site to be monitored regularly by the relevant Manager.

If you are feeling unwell or displaying symptoms, self-isolate and make phone contact with your GP and Meeting Administrator / Line Manager