

Running virtual meetings (incl. AGMs) effectively

This guide supports clubs and organisations to run their meetings (including AGMs) virtually.

Running a virtual meeting is a great solution when factors prevent you from meeting face-to-face, such as limited time, where organising a central location becomes impossible or in emergency situations.

Virtual meetings can be delivered just the same as face-to-face meetings but there are some key considerations to contemplate when planning and delivering virtually. This guide will explore some of those considerations and provide some top tips for delivering virtual meetings and AGMs.



Benefits of virtual meetings:

- Time is precious. Face-to-face meetings can often take a large chunk of someone's day/evening/weekend and may be a factor for someone not attending an important meeting. Hosting them virtually saves time on travel and things like securing a venue.
- They're convenient. You can join online meetings from the comfort of your home which can prove useful if people would otherwise need to be travelling long distances to attend. You can also share documents easily.
- You don't have to pay for a venue or travel costs. This can allow for budget to be spent elsewhere in your club or organisation and save costs for attendees.
- Meetings can be recorded. This will allow you to go back and understand decisions that were made and also gives those who couldn't attend the opportunity to watch the meeting back.
- You can be more effective. Due to the nature of virtual meetings this allows you to be more structured with what is said and how it's said therefore staying on task becomes easier. It also allows you to schedule meetings quicker as you are less reliant on venue hire or people being able to get from work to the venue, so you can discuss important club/organisation issues sooner and resolve them quicker.

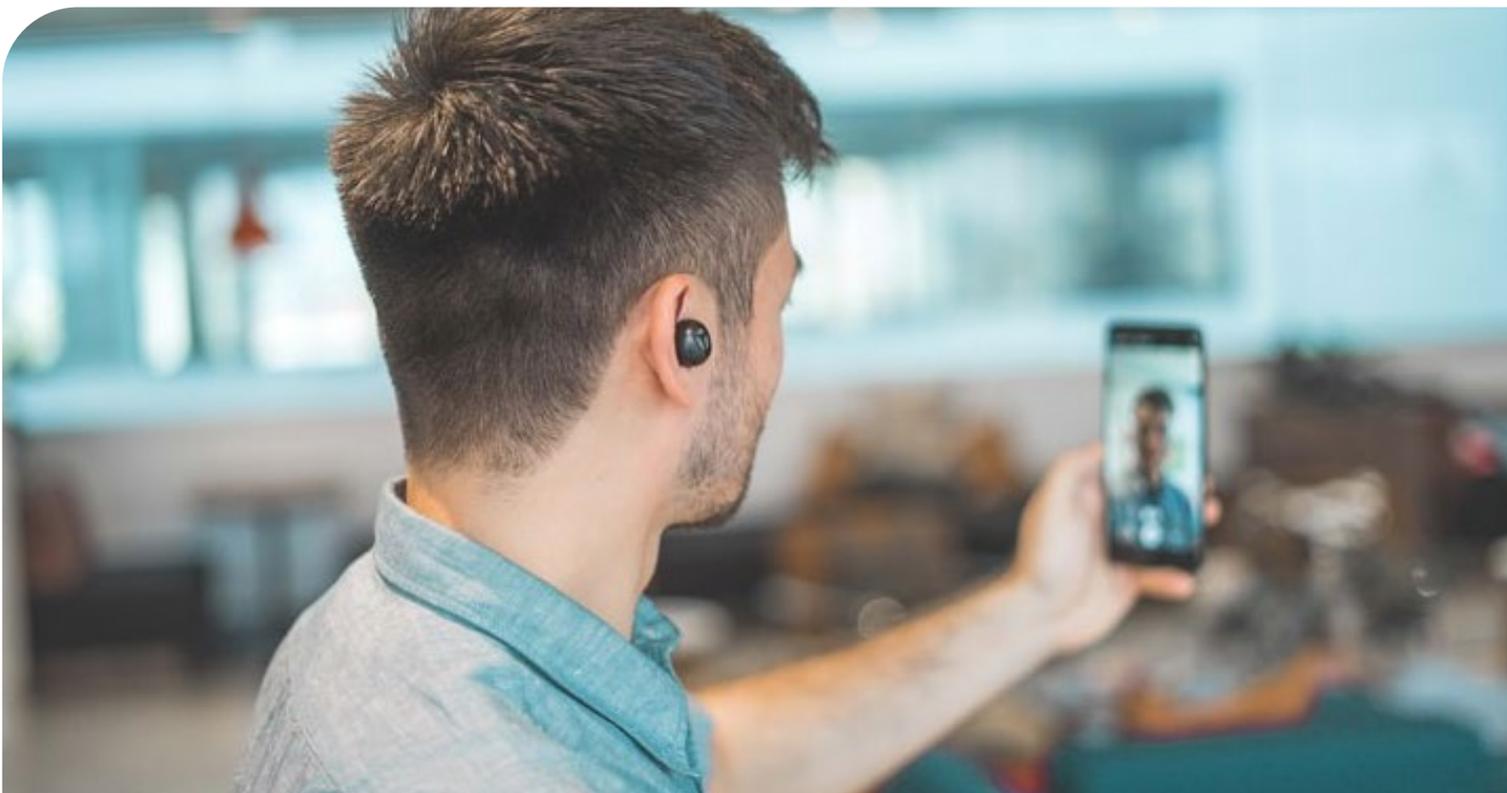
Before you start:

There are a few important things to think about, even if your club/organisation have been using technology as part of the running of your club for some time!

- Discuss the option of virtual meetings with your committee. Make sure you are informed about how you can use them and if it would be of benefit to your club/organisation. Committee members may also be able to help guide you towards a meeting platform that suits your need without needing to spend time testing others
- Make sure those you are planning to be involved in your meetings are comfortable online. Look at our resource available here on ['Preparing Your Committee to Operate Virtually'](#) to see how you can assess this and get some ideas on training opportunities

What's different about a face-to-face meeting and a virtual meeting?:

Typical meetings that clubs or organisations may run include, committee meetings, Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs). The below table highlights the key factors for making any meeting effective and focuses on how each factor might be different for virtual meetings.



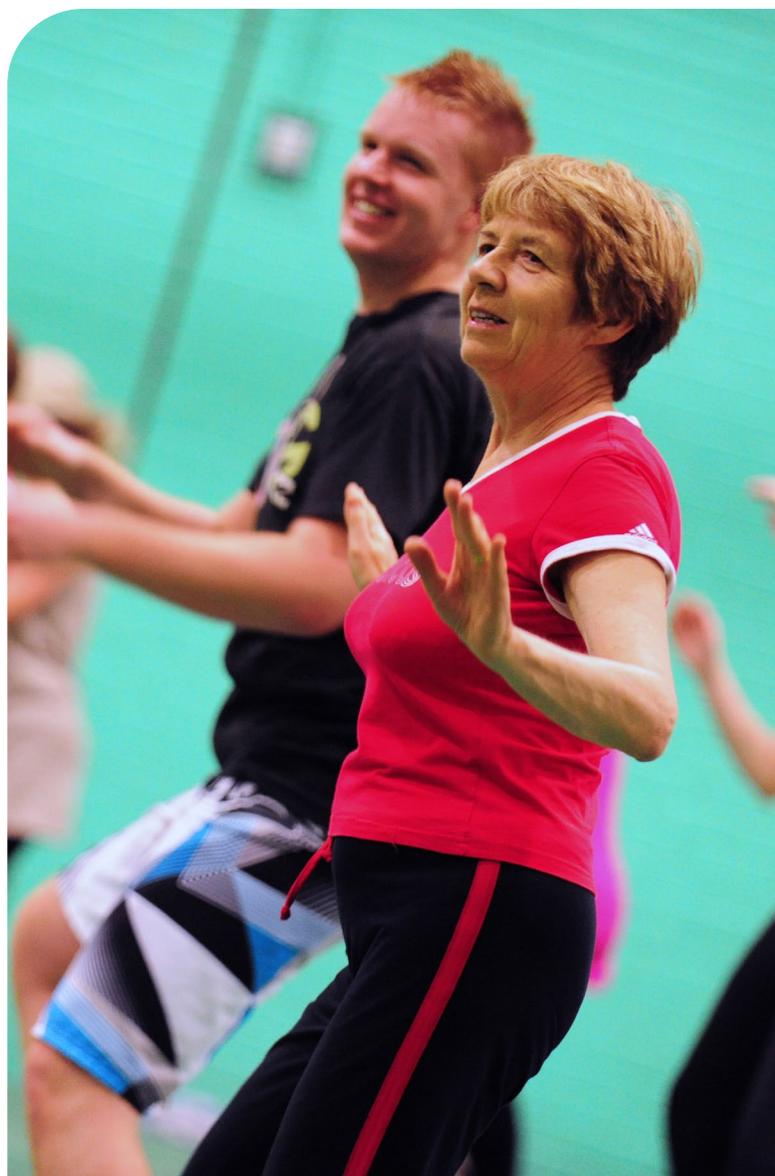
Planning and delivering effective face-to-face meetings (1)	Planning and delivering effective <u>virtual</u> meetings
Have clear objectives for the meeting, set an agenda and circulate in advance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » This is no different to face to face meetings – always be clear with what you want to get out of your meeting and be organised. » Sending out agendas, reports and details of the meeting in advance to ensure all members have access to required documents in enough time is important – you can't just hand them out when you get there if it's virtual! This also helps those who aren't as tech-savvy to get themselves set up in advance, so they feel comfortable.
Decide who should attend based on meeting type and content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Keep your meeting attendees to those who are essential. Although virtual meetings don't require travel time, having many people on a call can prove difficult to manage and can lead to voices not being heard. » Should you need a large number of people on the call, however, it needn't be a barrier, it simply requires the Chair to be clear on how attendees can communicate throughout the meeting (e.g. via a chat function, in allocated parts of the agenda).
Let attendees know the date, time and venue as early as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Send out an availability checker such as 'Doodle poll' to work out people's availability. This is a great way for the meeting organiser to clearly identify what the most suitable time and date is. Plus, with a virtual meeting you don't have the hassle of sorting, and potentially paying for, a venue. » What you do need to make sure of is that attendees are able to access the online meeting platform you have chosen. A lot of platforms do have introductory videos which can be useful, or you may be able to ask a family member or friend to show them in person prior to the meeting. » Send information on the platform being used in enough time so people can practice getting set up if necessary.
Ask attendees to RSVP so you know who to expect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Make sure you have relevant contact details (phone or email) of attendees so you can send them the access details of the virtual meeting software you are using – without this they won't be able to get in!
Send out a reminder a few days before the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Send out the access details of the meeting platform you are using. You may want to ask for confirmation from attendees that they have received the notification and that they are able to log in.
Assign roles for the meeting such as someone to write the minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identify in advance responsibilities for all key tasks such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up the meeting and circulating the information • Ensuring everyone is online • Chairing the meeting • Taking minutes/notes • Presenting information
Chair to manage the meeting following the agenda set out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » If you are using a virtual meeting platform for the first time, maybe try a practice run with a few committee members. This can allow people to get used to the system, make people comfortable with expectations of meetings and ensure the first proper meeting isn't clouded by issues people have had e.g. getting logged on. » If people drop out from the meeting (e.g. lost connection), including potentially the chair, then agree a protocol for how you deal with this so you aren't repeating yourselves or losing track of the meeting, especially if you have large numbers. » Also, as a committee, identify if people feel comfortable using cameras or if they would prefer to just speak – all key considerations that you may want to come to an agreement on in your test run!

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Planning and delivering effective face-to-face meetings (1)	Planning and delivering effective <u>virtual</u> meetings
Confirm all actions and decisions made throughout and ensure these are documented e.g. in the minutes	» This should be no different in a virtual meeting. You may want to record your meeting (using the record function on your meeting platform) to make it easier for the secretary (or assigned person) to take notes and check these after the meeting. You can also then share this with attendees who weren't available.
Confirm date, time and venue of next meeting	» As there are no venue restrictions, confirming a date and time of your next virtual meeting could be much easier.
Secretary (or assigned person) to type up minutes post-meeting and circulate for confirmation to attendees to ensure they are a fair representation of discussions	» Getting committee members used to receiving documents online, if you don't currently, may take some time. Why not look at our resource on 'Preparing Your Committee to Operate Virtually' available here
Committee should communicate an overview of discussion topics and decisions, including date of next meeting, to members/customers for transparency	» Again, this should be no different in virtual meetings. Just make sure you have identified that the meeting was held virtually so members/customers are clear.

Top tips for running meetings virtually:

- **Pick an online platform that works for your club or organisation.** There are many options out there for meeting platforms which can be found at the end of this resource. Why not trial and test some to see what works for you?
- **Make time for people to get used to the system.** This can often be challenging if you are new to online meetings. You may also find that committee members use systems in their everyday lives so are already comfortable with them.
- **Consider how best to manage attendees.** Even with a small meeting, unexpected background noise or attendees talking at the same time can cause confusion and lack of clarity. Encourage people to use the mute button unless they wish to speak.
- **Ensure communication is clear.** It's important that people know who is talking, particularly if the meeting is audio only. Ask people to say their name before they speak.
- **Each meeting is different.** Depending on the number of attendees or the importance of the meeting, consider whether using videos, chat boxes, or screen sharing are valuable to the outcome.



Running your AGMs virtually:

- The meeting should be run in accordance with the constitution or articles, particularly in terms of issuing the notice of the meeting and the circulation of papers. If as a committee you haven't run a virtual meeting before, do not make the AGM your first try! Things could go wrong with a virtual meeting such as internet signal, people not being able to access I properly etc., and with the potential for large numbers of people in attendance at your AGM, this could prove difficult to manage.
- The chair should prepare in advance by reviewing the constitution, articles and how the meeting should be run. Regardless of your constitution, a virtual meeting may well be an option under the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (CIGA). If you are an unincorporated organisation, CIGA does not apply and you should consult a lawyer on the correct interpretation of your rules, before running a virtual meeting. For more information on running virtual or hybrid AGM's for charities [click here](#). Please note that CIGA only applies to meetings held by 30 March 2021 and cannot be further extended.

Top tips for running virtual AGMs:

- **Ensure the AGM will be quorate.** There should be a clear understanding of how many members are required for decisions to be quorate. This should be stated within your constitution and still applies for virtual AGMs. Make sure you get members to pre-register in advance so you can decide whether to go ahead with the meeting.
- **Make sure you are prepared.** In advance, the Chair should:
 - > Identify a person or people who will count votes.
 - > Confirm the method for gathering votes in line with what's stated within the governing documents.
 - > Identify and brief others who are presenting such as treasurers.
 - > Highlight someone who can manage the administration of whichever online meeting system is being used throughout the AGM.

- **Be clear on rules of behaviour.** At the start of the meeting identify the rules of behaviour. Some systems have an ability to put a "hand up" – if possible, this should be used. It may also be useful to have a PowerPoint slide showing the rules as people are joining the meeting.
- **Encourage members to send questions, comments or concerns in advance to the secretary.** This will prevent confusion throughout the AGM. You may also be able to use chat functions throughout the meeting so people can ask questions at relevant times or if they don't feel comfortable speaking. The secretary (or assigned person) should manage this as per a usual AGM format.
- **Manage voting carefully.** Any proxy votes should be held and confirmed by the secretary (or assigned person). Everyone, like in normal circumstances, should have an opportunity to speak and vote if eligible. Voting should be administered by the teller who should record names and how they have voted. They should add up and report this to the meeting. It is worth considering a second teller to confirm the prime teller's count. Voting can be recorded either verbally by every member or asking members to put their name and voting position through a chat box. Confidential voting could be carried out through direct messaging to the teller who should be trustworthy enough not to indicate how people voted. It is very difficult to ensure a completely confidential way of voting unless using an external voting system as identified below.
- **Make sure documents are still shown.** The person supporting the Chair should share their screen with all documentation as they would in a face-to-face meeting. The supporter should be directed by the Chair to show appropriate documents such as the Chairperson's report, Treasurer's report, proposed changes to the constitution, etc.
- **Why not record your AGM?** This can help the secretary (or assigned person) to review and ensure the minutes are accurate and gives an opportunity for those who were unable to attend to attend.

For more information on how to run an AGM and what should be covered, whether face-to-face or virtually, please visit [here](#).

Examples of meeting platforms:

There are many options for virtual meeting platforms, including options for voting, and lots that are free! We have provided some examples below – why not try some out to see what suits your club or organisation?

<p>Microsoft Teams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 50 users on a call • Available on numerous devices • Screen sharing/presenting possible • Recorded meetings possible • Group/private messaging possible • File storage with live editing
<p>Google Hangouts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 150 users on a call (10 on video) • Available on numerous devices • Screenshare available • Call recording available • Need a Google account to organise a meeting
<p>Whatsapp</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 users per call • Available on numerous devices • Private/group messaging available • Maximum of 256 people in a group chat
<p>GoTo Meeting</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid for service • Maximum of 26 people - anymore than this and GoTo Webinar is an alternative • Available on numerous devices • Screen sharing/presenting available • Recorded meetings possible
<p>Zoom</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 100 people per call • Meetings of more than 2 people automatically end after 40 minutes • Option to upgrade to paid version for further features • Available on numerous devices • Screen sharing available • Recorded meetings possible



Key Links

1. [Club Matters Effective Meetings](#)
2. [Running Sports - how to run an AGM \(PDF download\)](#)

Examples of methods for virtual voting:

 <p>Google Docs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Up to 200 people can view • Anonymous voting possible • Need a Google account to access
 <p>Survey Monkey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • 100 voters max • Anonymous voting possible
 <p>Mentimeter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • All voters need to be online at the same time • No voter limit • Limits on questions - can create multiple surveys but only 2 questions per survey

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