

ADVICE NOTE 7: Coronavirus and APPGs – Advice Effective from 25 June 2021

Email sent to all APPG chairs on 29 June 2021 from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards:

Guidance on APPG formal meetings from 25 June 2021 until further notice

I hope you are enjoying good health and the warm weather. I am writing to provide an update on the rules for APPG formal meetings, including AGMs, with effect from 25 June.

- 1) Since 8 June 2020, APPGs have been required to hold their formal meetings virtually. This requirement continues, with one small relaxation of the rules. This means that until further notice your APPG must still hold its formal meetings remotely, except in the very limited circumstances described in paragraph 2 below. Formal meetings include inaugural meetings, annual general meetings (AGMs), and other meetings involving decisions or elections.

Conditions for meeting in person

- 2) Your group can meet in person only if you, as Chair, have satisfied yourself that the group will be able to observe
 - a) any current rules on social distancing, and
 - b) any current restrictions on the capacity of the venue, and
 - c) any current restrictions on visitors to the estate. (Presently only essential visitors are permitted. APPG visitors and secretariats are unlikely to be regarded as essential visitors.)

When deciding whether to meet in person, please bear in mind both health and safety issues and ease of attendance. Some members may be unable to attend in person.

Future arrangements

- 3) We expect that hybrid meetings will become possible as additional AV facilities are rolled out. We will be in touch again at that stage. Hybrid facilities would enable some parliamentarians to attend in person while others attend remotely. However the facilities are operating only in a very small number of rooms at present. Until further notice APPGs should not arrange hybrid meetings for their formal business.

Practical arrangements for formal meetings

- 4) To set up your formal meeting you must
 - a) Advertise it at least one week in advance on the All-Party Notices. Your notice must give
 - the date and time of the meeting, whether it is an Inaugural, AGM or EGM or other meeting, and if it involves an election. (An AGM needs to take place within the 4 months after the end of that reporting year. To check the date of your reporting year please see your register entry.) It must be on a day when both Houses are sitting;
 - the time of any voting (if different);
 - for remote or hybrid meetings, the deadline for registering to attend the meeting, which should normally be no later than 6pm on the day before the election;
 - for remote or hybrid meetings, contact details for someone with a parliamentary email address who will act as administrator for the meeting and the voting. This person must provide the log in details (if needed), and send out and receive any ballot papers (if

used).

- b) Advertise the meeting on your group's website if it has one. You may also want to send details to all parliamentary members of your group. But do not send mass emails to all parliamentarians.
- c) Check that the meeting is quorate. The quorum is set out at paragraphs 20 d and e of Guide to the Rules for APPGs.
- d) After any vote, arrange a count. You must count only votes which come from parliamentarians or the parliamentary email addresses of current members of the House of Commons or House of Lords.
- e) Prepare minutes of the meeting in the usual way, and include the result of any voting. These do not have to include the names of those who voted. In accordance with paragraph 27 of the Guide to the Rules for APPGs, your group must publish the minutes on its website if it has one. If your group has no website it must keep copies of the minutes and provide them to enquirers on request.
- f) We do not prescribe how elections are to be conducted, or what software to use for votes. However, if it is to be a single yes/no decision you may find it easy to use Outlook voting buttons.

Other rules for APPGs

- 5) The rules can be found via the APPG webpages on the Parliamentary website: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg/rules-on-appgs/>. The key document is the Guide to the Rules for APPGs, which I encourage you to read. Please also see our advice notes, which offer specific and detailed guidance on a range of subjects including financial management, data protection and security as well as meeting arrangements during the pandemic.
- 6) If you need more information, the Registrar (Heather Wood) and the Assistant Registrar (Philippa Wainwright) are happy to help and advise. Please do feel free to contact them (via groupsregister@parliament.uk or on 0207 219 3277 or 0401).

Kind regards



Kathryn Stone OBE
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

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For advice contact: groupsregister@parliament.uk or call the Commissioner's office on 020 7219 3277 or 0207 219 0401