

ADVICE NOTE 7: Coronavirus and APPGs – Advice Effective from 29 April 2021

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

I hope you and yours are enjoying good health and that you are looking forward to a summer of warm weather and fewer restrictions.

I am writing to remind you about key rules for APPGs, and to update you on the rules for APPG meetings. These rules will last until 21 June 2021.

Rules for APPGs

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, security and on meeting arrangements during the pandemic.

We receive regular complaints about APPGs breaking the rules as set out in the Guide to the Rules. If these allegations are supported by evidence, I may open an investigation. I have noticed that several recent complaints have focussed on documents published by APPGs. I take this opportunity to remind you that these must carry disclaimers and acknowledgements of funding on the front cover (see paras 22-24 of the Guide to the Rules on APPGs). And if you use the crowned portcullis, it must be the correct version of this approved for APPGs (see Advice Note 4 : The APPG Logo).

Formal meetings of APPGs

The current arrangements for formal meetings continue until 21 June 2021. This means that any formal meetings must be virtual and not face to face until that date. The guidance from September 2020 (set out below for convenience) will continue to apply, and we will send further guidance in June before any change.

‘Guidance effective from 15 September 2020

Since 8 June 2020, APPGs have been required to hold their formal meetings virtually. Formal meetings include inaugurals, and meetings involving decision taking and elections. It is unlikely that you need to hold an AGM in 2020, but if you do hold such a meeting before the end of the session, this too must be virtual. (For most groups their reporting year will end in early 2021, and an AGM would need 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.)

We ask you to avoid holding face to face APPG meetings on the estate, whether formal or informal, even if some members participate remotely. To hold a virtual formal meeting, you must:

1. 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. It must be on a day when both Houses are sitting;
 - the time of any voting (if different);

- the deadline for registering to attend the meeting, which should normally be no later than 6pm on the day before the election;
- contact details for someone with a parliamentary email address who will act as administrator for the meeting and the voting. They must provide the log in details (if needed), and send out and receive any ballot papers (if used).

2. 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.

3. Check that the meeting is quorate. The quorum is set out at paragraphs 20 d and e of Guide to the Rules for APPGs.

4. After any vote, arrange a count. You must count only votes which come from parliamentary email addresses and are from current members of the House of Commons or House of Lords.

5. 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.

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.'

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

Document owner: Registrar of Member's Financial Interests, Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards
Date of document: 16 March 2020. Updated: 23/03/2020; 26/03/2020; 27/04/2020; 08/06/2020; and 15/09/2020; 29 April 2021
For advice contact: groupsregister@parliament.uk or call the Commissioner's office on 020 7219 3277 or 0207 219 0401