

Effective trustees in a Covid-19 world

**In a time when more and more of us are working in ‘isolation’,
how do trustees continue to operate as effectively as possible?**

The Pensions Regulator issued guidance on 12 March reminding trustees that they expect them to have appropriate monitoring and contingency planning in place for risks, and appropriate business continuity plans. Meetings are a key part of business continuity and need to happen. These are essential to enable trustees to keep on top of matters, and to ensure there remains appropriate governance and monitoring in a fast-moving environment. Deferring meetings for what could be an indefinite period is no way to run a pension scheme’s business.

So we need to get used to meetings happening in a different way. Here are our top ten tips for effective virtual meetings.

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Aon plc (NYSE:AON) is a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. Our 50,000 colleagues in 120 countries empower results for clients by using proprietary data and analytics to deliver insights that reduce volatility and improve performance.



Contact us

If you would like to know more about the actions you can take to enhance your trustee effectiveness, please contact us.

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Top ten tips for effective virtual meetings.



1. Bite-sized chunks

Break down your meeting into bite-sized chunks of no more than 1–2 hours.



2. Virtual meeting

Hold virtual meetings – once a week/month depending on the level of activity on the scheme, starting with your most strategically important/ time critical items. Be clear at the start of the meeting what the objectives are and include timings on the agenda to ensure that the time on the call is focused.



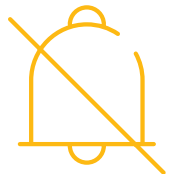
3. Preparation is key

Make sure the trustees have plenty of time to read papers before the virtual meeting, so that time is not spent familiarising everyone with the material. If there are only one or two papers (as the agenda is short), this might only be two or three days before the virtual meeting, but make sure advisers and trustees are clear on what is expected. And try to keep ‘verbal update’ items to an absolute minimum... it is very easy to start losing a lot of time, and people’s interest, if there is no clear structure to the discussion.



4. Video facility

Use your video on the virtual meeting. It makes a huge difference in the way you connect with people – and make sure your camera is such that you are looking at it, and not something in the far corner of the room!



5. ‘Do not disturb’

Treat a virtual meeting in the same way you would a face-to-face meeting – turn on your ‘Do not disturb’ on your phone and instant messaging settings, and stop email notifications, so that you do not get distracted.



6. Offer help

Some trustees won’t be familiar with using a virtual meeting facility (or will not have one at all). Give those that want to, an option to do a run through with someone on their own before the meeting, so that any hiccups can be smoothed out before the main meeting – this saves embarrassment (and time) all round. Remind them of conference call details if they cannot connect by virtual meeting, but encourage virtual meeting participation.



7. Challenge for the Chair

Chairing a virtual meeting meeting is a challenge. Consider which advisers need to be present on each call to minimise the number of voices.



8. Any questions

The Chair will also need to pause or check more regularly if there are any questions – they will be getting less feedback during the discussion. Consider using ‘Raise a hand’ / ‘ask a question’ facility in the virtual meeting – or agree a protocol for asking questions to avoid people talking over each other. The scheme secretary may be best placed to facilitate this.



9. Formality

While ordinary meetings may be quite relaxed, a more formal style works better on a virtual meeting to ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to share their views.



10. Clarity on action points

The Chair might need to be more explicit on who is taking forward which actions and by when to ensure that the secretary is able to capture everything accurately – working out which voice belongs to whom can be difficult if there are 10+ people on a call.

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