

## Meetings of Church Courts

### Including Presbytery, Kirk Session, Deacons' Court and Finance Committee

### Also Congregational Annual General Meetings

*This note carries advice or recommendations. The document is subject to change as our response to COVID-19 develops.*

#### Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
V.1	01/04/2020	First version of document
V.2	17/08/2020	Information added on holding Annual Congregational Meetings (P3 below)

The Board of Trustees recommends that courts of the Church meet by telephone, email, video etc. as far as possible. It will be prudent to deal with essential business only at this time. The Church has legislation covering the use of technology (Act 33, 2010) which is copied below.

Many courts are successfully using voice or video conferencing solutions e.g. Google Hangouts, Skype and Zoom. We note that OSCR the Charity Regulator has also endorsed meetings taking place over the phone or using digital solutions<sup>1</sup>.

**In respect of Congregational Annual General Meetings**, the May 2020 General Assembly instructed Deacons' Courts and Finance Committees, in the event that it has not been possible to hold the Annual Congregational Meeting, to submit annual reports and accounts to OSCR provided these have first of all been approved by the Deacons' Court/Finance Committee.

#### **Act 33, 2010 - Act anent Use of Modern Technology in Conducting Church Business**

The General Assembly, recognising the advantages to be obtained from the use of modern technology in conducting the business of Church courts, committees and boards hereby enact as follows:

1. Technology such as video conferencing may only be used for the conduct of meetings where all members of the court, committee or board have reasonably ready access to such facilities.
2. The minutes of a meeting conducted by video or telephone conferencing shall indicate the location of the meeting as being that of the chairman or convener and should also note that some members were present by way of video or telephone link.
3. The sederunt of a meeting conducted by video or telephone conferencing shall be read out by the secretary or clerk once all participants have joined the meeting.
4. It is preferable that matters requiring a vote to be taken be held over until a subsequent face to face meeting. If a vote needs to be taken on a particular matter, at the instruction of the chairman or convener, the secretary or clerk shall record the vote of each member in turn and after totalling the votes, advise the board or committee accordingly and record in the minute as normal.

5. All members of courts, committees or boards must ensure that normal rules governing confidentiality are adhered to in the conduct of meetings held by telephone or video conferencing.
6. Any decisions relating to the business of a court, committee or board, taken outside of a formal meeting (for example, decisions taken following email consultation) must be recorded formally in the minute of the next meeting.

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/covid-19-guidance-for-charities/3-charity-meetings-and-governance/>