# Virtual Meeting Attendance Policy

## East Anglian Schools' Trust

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Approved by:** | EAST Trust Board | **Date:** | 23 March 2020 |
| **Last reviewed on:** | 23 March 2020 | | |
| **Next review due by:** | Under regular review – 3 yearly. | | |

## 1 Introduction

Article 126 of the model articles of association state;

126. Any Trustee shall be able to participate in meetings of the Trustees by telephone or video conference provided that:

    a. they have given notice of their intention to do so detailing the telephone number on which they can be reached and/or appropriate details of the video conference suite from which they shall be taking part at the time of the meeting at least 48 hours before the meeting; and
    b. the Trustees have access to the appropriate equipment.

    If after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for the individual to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

## 2 Local Governing Bodies (LGBs)

The proceedings of meetings of LGBs are determined by the Trust Board (article 100) therefore virtual attendance at face to face meetings and virtual meetings as described in this policy can be enabled by the Trust Board on adoption of this policy.

In relation to this, the East Anglian Schools' Trust Board has determined the following arrangements will apply. These arrangements apply to meetings of the Trust Board, LGBs and to LGB Committee meetings.

## 3 Virtual Attendance at Face to Face Meetings

- Where an individual wishes to attend a meeting by either telephone or video link the chair must be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting to ensure that appropriate arrangements can be made where possible.
- The individual will be asked their reasons for not attending the meeting in person and their attendance virtually will be subject to the approval of the forum at the beginning of the meeting, though this approval will not be withheld without good reason. Where approval is withheld the reason for this will be minuted, and the individual informed immediately.
- Individuals attending the meeting either by telephone or video conference will be entitled to vote on any issue providing they have been 'present' for the whole agenda item which the vote relates to.
- Where a secret ballot is required this will be facilitated where possible (e.g. by taking a telephone call off speaker phone and the individual sharing their vote verbally with the clerk). Where this is not possible the individual will be required either to vote publicly or abstain.

Individuals attending the meeting virtually will contribute to the quorum for the meeting. If the technological link is lost, they will cease to contribute to the quorum, but this will not prevent the meeting continuing in their absence unless it has become inquorate. The meeting will be chaired by an individual who is present in person, where possible, so that a totally virtual meeting is feasible in exceptional circumstances. I guess another alternative is to change the venue of the meeting to the home of the chair!

- If, after all reasonable efforts, it does not prove possible for an individual to participate by telephone or video conference the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

## 4 Virtual Meetings

- It is expected that unless there are exceptional circumstances, all statutory meetings and termly scheduled committee meetings will be face to face meetings. However additional and extraordinary meetings can take place via telephone or video conference call as long as the usual quorum is 'present' on the call.
- Where a meeting is taking place virtually every effort will be made to enable all individuals to access the meeting.
- Where a meeting is taking place virtually the usual statutory notice arrangements will apply and all papers to be considered will be circulated at least seven days in advance of the meeting, except where the chair has exercised their right to waive the usual notice in an emergency situation.
- Virtual meetings will be minuted in the same way as other meetings, either by the clerk being present virtually or by an individual, other than the headteacher / principal / CEO, and these will be presented for approval to the next meeting.
- Virtual meetings should not be recorded by any individual or the clerk without the approval of the attendees and for a specified purpose.

## 5 Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed every three years, but any individual with any concerns about its operation can request that it is reviewed at any time by reference to the CEO.

## Appendix A What to Consider When Setting Up a Virtual Meeting

### Advantages

- You can set up a meeting quickly.
- Individuals do not all have to be in the same place.
- If reaching a quorum is sometimes a challenge the option for virtual attendance could help to resolve the issue.
- Members in different regions and countries can meet at short notice. This could be particularly helpful when you need to discuss or approve something urgently before the next scheduled meeting.

### Potential Issues

- It may be best to reserve detailed discussion for face to face meetings since it can be difficult to communicate as effectively.
- Time delays or technology challenges can interrupt the flow of the conversation.
- If someone is not physically in the room, they may play a lesser part in the meeting
- It could be hard to make sure the conversation is confidential.

### Mitigate Potential Issues

- Have a clear process in place for what to do if and when these problems arise.
- Invest in reliable teleconferencing services or equipment, or research virtual meeting platforms.
- Clarify that the individual attending remotely still needs to meet the expectations around confidentiality.