

Unite Guidance

Branch meetings online *advice for members*



There has been a huge growth in meetings online, for both work and personal events.

Unite committees and branches have also been making use of the software that is out there to ensure that the business of the union can be conducted during this time of crisis, tiers, lockdown and profound upheaval.

The union has provided detailed guidance to branch officers on holding branch meetings

online. The advice here is intended for members attending branch meetings. All of the rules about conduct at an in person branch meeting apply equally to online meetings.

Branch officers must adhere to the requirements placed on branches by the Unite rule book, and branch standing orders, for passing motions, spending branch funds, making nominations etc when holding an online meeting. **You must too.**

GETTING STARTED

Virtual (aka online) meetings may take the form of a telephone or video conference call.

Do you need special equipment to attend?

No, video conferencing software can be run on your desktop computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. You will need to be connected to Wi-Fi. Check that your speaker and camera work because you will need these to participate in the meeting.

How will I know a meeting is taking place?

The branch will tell you about the time, date and format of the meeting in the same way that they would notify you of any branch meeting. They will also advise you how to join any virtual meeting.

Many branches have a notice on the Unite website which you can access using the My Account login showing when and where they meet. If they do not post a notice here then they will communicate the meeting notice to you using another method.

Make use of My Account on the Unite website to manage your details

It is important that your membership record and in particular contact details are up to date. You can update them by logging on to the My Account section of the Unite Website. On the home page you will see a My Account button. When you click on this you will be asked to log in. If you do not already have a log in you will be guided through the process of setting one up.

When you get into your account you can use the MY PROFILE button to manage your details and click ABOUT ME to see whether your e-mail and postal addresses are correct and update them if necessary. You can also find out about your branch's meetings by pressing the BRANCH button.

REMEMBER – if your contact information isn't up to date your branch secretary may not be able to contact you.

If you require further advice on My Account access please contact your Regional Office.

AT THE MEETING

The Chair is in charge

The Chair of the meeting will ensure that the meeting runs in an orderly fashion. They will run the meeting in the way that they would an in-person meeting, calling people to speak, keeping order, and taking votes etc.

The mute button is the meeting's friend

You should remain on mute unless invited to speak by the Chair. There should be no speaking over other people.

What is the Waiting Room?

When you join the meeting you will be placed in a waiting room. The person running the meeting will verify your membership before allowing you to join.

Make sure you display your name

Each person in attendance at the meeting should have their correct name displayed for identification purposes. If the name on your screen doesn't identify you properly the secretary may ask you to amend it, or they may do this for you.

Quorum still stands

The requirement for a minimum of 5 members in attendance to make a quorum is not varied for virtual meetings.

Voters must be seen

It is common practice in video meeting calls for

people to turn off their video, e.g. if they have a poor Wi-Fi signal.

However, when taking a vote the Chair will ensure that all members voting can be seen and have their video turned on to verify that the meeting remains quorate. If you cannot turn on your video you should verbally confirm that you are still in attendance when the Chair calls on you.

Keep it confidential

Members attending a branch meeting in a virtual format should treat it as if it is an in-person meeting. The usual requirements to respect others in attendance and to keep the confidentiality and integrity of the meeting remain in place. Unite's harassment policy also applies to virtual meetings. All members should be aware of the security of participants in terms of screen sharing, recording, preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination

Equality of access to meetings

Unite's commitment to supporting disabled members' access to meetings also applies to virtual meetings. If you have any specific requirements to allow you to attend your branch meeting, please contact your branch secretary.

Useful Resources

Unite has produced a number of digital guides that will help members when attending an online meeting. These are available on Vimeo and YouTube:

On Vimeo:

How to use Zoom

<https://vimeo.com/486848140>

Video call etiquette

<https://vimeo.com/486854744>

How to use WhatsApp

<https://vimeo.com/486861243>

And on YouTube:

How to use Zoom

<https://youtu.be/73lUQozfdWs>

Video call etiquette

<https://youtu.be/tVJtlYieNdg>

How to use WhatsApp

<https://youtu.be/ryBJoRI3OSg>

