



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

VIDEOCONFERENCING ETIQUETTE GUIDANCE

As a result of the COVID 19 lockdown virtual meetings have become crucial in ensuring the Diocese can continue to function at a time when physical meetings are not possible. Some will be very comfortable with videoconferencing, whereas for others this is completely new territory.

The following are ten short points to bear in mind when using videoconferencing for Diocesan meetings and are designed to improve user experience for all taking part in this platform. They are based on using Zoom, but the principles apply for any videoconferencing application.

- 1) **Confidentiality** – where a meeting is of a confidential nature be mindful of where you are situated if there are other people in your home with you. Also please be mindful of information that you are giving during virtual meetings. There is no difference between a virtual and physical meeting in respect of the need for confidentiality.
- 2) **Background and clothing** – using videoconferencing can be very revealing as it gives others an insight in to homes and lifestyle they otherwise may not have had. Please be mindful of the background when you are attending virtual meetings. Zoom allows you to change your background if that would offer a more comfortable option for you. Whilst we are not expecting people to dress as formally as they normally would do, please also make sure your clothing is appropriate. For some formal meetings all members must have their video on so that they are present and can both see and hear each other.
- 3) **Name** – before joining the meeting please ensure you name is correct, particularly if you are using someone else's device. In some cases it will show as 'Nathan's iphone' or similar. Please change this to your full name to assist the chair, secretary and other members.
- 4) **Taking part in meetings** – we want members to contribute as they normally would during a physical meeting. However, it is best if all contributions are as concise as possible. Videoconferencing can have the same effect as someone sitting down to watch TV, which is not what is intended, so please stay engaged with the meeting and avoid the trap of becoming an observer.

- 5) **Chair's instructions** – please listen carefully to the instruction given by the chair at the start of the meeting as to how they wish to conduct the meeting. In some instances, the use of the raise hand function will be the method to control the meeting. In other less formal meetings there may be a more free approach for participants to input.
- 6) **Muting** – please be mindful of the use of the mute button. If you are not intending to contribute please ensure you are muted to avoid the risk of background noise interfering with the meeting. You can use the space bar to temporarily remove mute whilst it is held down. This can be particularly useful if you are only making a very brief contribution. The Chair of the meeting may take the decision to mute all participants from the outset.
- 7) **Time keeping** – please ensure that you log in to the meeting at least a few minutes prior to the stated start time so that we can make a prompt start. The Chair will ensure the meetings are as short as practicable to complete the agenda. Please be mindful that others may have spent a significant proportion of their day videoconferencing and may be suffering from fatigue. Where the meeting is unavoidably lengthy the chair will build in short breaks as necessary.
- 8) **Chat** – The chat facility offered through Zoom can be a helpful tool during the meeting or for picking up points subsequent to the meeting. However please use this responsibly and keep contributions relevant to the meeting. The text of the chat function may be downloaded and retained for records.
- 9) **Recording** – it is possible to record meetings using Zoom. We may use this if it will be useful for future reference, e.g. production of formal minutes. The Chair will make it clear to all attendees when the record function is to be used.
- 10) **Feedback and communication** – It is important that you flag up any concerns about the use of videoconferencing technology to us. Organisationally this is a new way of working and we are all learning. So if there is something we can do to help improve the experience for you please do say. Training and other support can be provided remotely.