



# Virtual Governance Policy

<b>Approval date: 01/01/2026</b>	<b>Approved by: Board</b>
<b>Applies to:</b> Board Members, officers and employees of the Board.	<b>Linked Documents:</b> N/A
<b>Frequency of review: 3 years</b>	<b>Next review date: April 2029</b>

## 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the arrangements for virtual and hybrid attendance at meetings of the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board, including Board meetings, Committee meetings, and any other formal governance or operational meetings. It aims to support effective participation while upholding good governance principles and compliance with the Board's Standing Orders and the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

## 2. Principles

The Board supports virtual or hybrid participation where it enhances access and continuity, particularly in circumstances where travel is impractical. Decisions made at such meetings will have the same status as those made at in-person meetings, provided quorum and transparency requirements are met.

## 3. Meeting Access and Participation

### Recording of Meetings

Meetings held virtually or in hybrid form may be recorded for the sole purpose of supporting accurate minute-taking. Recordings will be securely stored by the Clerk or Office Manager and deleted once the minutes have been formally approved. No other recordings are permitted without the prior agreement of the Board and for a specified purpose.

### Papers and Notice

Meetings held virtually or in hybrid form will follow the same notice requirements as in-person meetings. All agendas and supporting papers will be circulated to Members no fewer than five working days before the meeting, unless the Chair exercises discretion to waive the notice period in exceptional circumstances (e.g. an urgent decision). It remains the responsibility of each Member to review the papers in advance, regardless of their mode of attendance.

## 4. Virtual Attendance Expectations

### Camera and Connectivity

Members attending virtually are expected to have their cameras switched on and maintain a stable connection throughout. Eligibility for quorum and voting purposes is outlined in Section 7. If a Member disables their video feed without explanation or loses technological connection, they may be deemed absent for quorum and voting purposes for that item.



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### Full Attendance Requirement

Members attending virtually are expected to be present for the entire duration of the meeting, unless prior agreement has been obtained from the Clerk. Selective attendance is discouraged, as it can undermine shared accountability and informed decision-making.

If a Member joins late or leaves early without prior notice, this may be recorded in the minutes and may affect their eligibility to vote on items for which they were not present in full. Persistent partial attendance without reasonable cause may be raised with the Chair and, if necessary, referred to the Board for consideration.

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

### 5. Definitions

- **Virtual meeting:** All participants attend remotely via telephone or video conferencing.
- **Hybrid meeting:** Some participants attend in person, and others join remotely.
- **Member:** Any appointed or co-opted Board or Committee Member, Officer, or Attendee.

### 6. Attendance via Telephone or Video Link

Where a Member wishes to attend virtually:

- At least 24 hours' notice should be provided to the Clerk or Office Manager with the relevant access details (phone number or video link).
- Virtual attendance is subject to approval by the Chair at the start of the meeting. This approval should not be unreasonably withheld.
- The reason for attending virtually may be requested to support planning and ensure fairness, but need not be minuted.

### 7. Quorum and Voting

- A Member attending virtually counts towards quorum only if present for the entirety of the agenda item under discussion.
- Members attending virtually may vote, provided they are present for the full discussion of the item.
- If a secret ballot is required, arrangements should be made to ensure confidentiality, such as using private message functions or confidential voice calls to the Clerk.
- If technical failure results in a Member being disconnected, they will cease to count towards quorum until reconnected.



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### 8. Chairing and Conduct

- The Chair (or Vice-Chair, where delegated) should attend in person where practicable, to support effective meeting management.
- All participants should ensure a quiet and confidential space and use appropriate naming and muting protocols on video calls.

### 9. Confidentiality and Security

- All Members attending virtually are reminded of their duty to uphold confidentiality as set out in the Code of Conduct.
- Devices and connections should be secure.

### 10. Limitations and Exceptions

While virtual attendance is encouraged to improve flexibility, it should not replace in-person engagement as the norm for scheduled quarterly or annual meetings unless agreed in advance.

### 11. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if legislation or operational needs change.

#### Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Summary of Changes
1.0	01/04/2026	Initial policy approved