

REMOTE HEARING PROTOCOLS

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PARTIES

1. Introduction

- I. The President of the Valuation Tribunal for England (VTE) has decided that in certain circumstances appeals will be heard using the Microsoft Teams (Teams) facility.
- II. Proceedings conducted in this manner will be referred to as Remote Hearings.
- III. Parties are reminded that Remote Hearings are real hearings conducted by remote access technology. There may be members of the public observing the hearing. The decorum of the hearing still applies and the VTE expects the behaviour of the parties to be the same as that for face to face hearings.
- IV. Parties do not need to have the Teams app to partake in proceedings, just follow the link provided by the VTS with the invite.

2. Establishing a Remote Hearing

- I. On request, parties will need to provide an email address which will be used for the hearing and any electronic communication on the day.
- II. Each party will receive an invite to the start for the commencement of the hearing. It may be that the specific case you are participating in only requires part of a session. In those circumstances you will be notified by email by one of our staff on the day shortly before the case will be heard.
- III. If calling a witness to give evidence, please notify the VTS in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place.
- IV. Please follow the online protocols when joining the hearing.

3. Joining the hearing (online protocols)

- I. Use a headset with microphone if possible as this will provide optimal audio experience for all.
- II. Avoid sitting with your back to a window or bright light source as it may distort your identity.
- III. Close doors around you to avoid unexpected visitors/interruptions.
- IV. Join when invited to do so and don't leave it late as you will need to check your equipment works!
- V. Mute other devices and apps.
- VI. Enter the remote hearing with your mic muted and camera off as another case may still be running. The senior member will speak to you when it is time for your case to be heard.
- VII. Turn your camera (and mic) on when speaking.
- VIII. Keep your mic off when not speaking

4. The Hearing

- I. The panel will notify you when the hearing commences if they have already read your case. If that is the situation then you do not need to read your case in full again, just present the main points.
- II. The panel will advise you of the procedure on the day and invite you to speak at the appropriate time. Normal VTE etiquette should be applied and the panel members addressed formally.
- III. If you have poor internet connection please advise the panel. The hearing will not proceed without both parties being able to participate.
- IV. Also advise the panel if there are likely to be unavoidable interruptions and these will be catered for (such as deliveries, childcare issues etc)
- V. If the connection breaks try and reconnect, proceedings will be adjourned when there is a break.
- VI. If calling a witness, try and arrange for them to be ready and on Teams but with the mic and camera switched off until called by you. If a hard copy witness statement has been provided to the other party and panel beforehand, there is no need for them to read the statement. You

might wish for them to highlight the main points of their evidence. Then ask them to await instructions from the panel on questions (please ensure they have read a copy of this paper on what to do).

- VII. Please only speak when invited to by the senior member. There should be no need for a party to interrupt another party or a panel member. If for any reason you need to interrupt proceedings either virtually raise your arm through the Teams system or if that is not available to you, please raise your arm on camera. Parties are to be encouraged to keep any interruptions to a minimum.
- VIII. Refer to the document, the page number (and ideally paragraph numbers) when highlighting part of a document already provided. The senior member will advise you when he has found it.
- IX. When invited to ask questions, ensure that you only ask one question at a time. Await the answer before speaking again – do not interrupt the other party's response.
- X. Regular breaks will be arranged and parties should ensure that their mics are turned off during such breaks but that they return promptly as directed by the panel to continue proceedings.
- XI. The panel will be suitably attired for a hearing as though the parties were present and there is an expectation the parties will be similarly dressed.
- XII. At the end of the hearing both parties will be invited to sum up. Then please wait online whilst the panel retire to check they have all the information they require. The clerk will contact you within 5-10 minutes of the hearing ending to confirm that either the panel have all the information they require or that they wish to continue proceedings through Teams.