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To all Governing Benchers,

VIRTUAL MEETING PARTICIPATION GUIDANCE
FOR COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The ability to manage the Inn's committee meetings efficiently but with all or some participants attending by video or teleconferencing, rather than being physically present, will support the continued effective governance of the Inn. As well as being an essential option for the lockdown period of the Coronavirus pandemic, this enhanced accessibility will allow the Inn to benefit more fully from the input of our members who are unable to attend meetings in person, for instance because they are on circuit, have court commitments elsewhere or have childcare responsibilities.

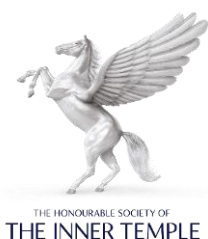
After reviewing various software options, the Inn has acquired educational licenses for Zoom for hosting virtual meetings. Since the use of Zoom to conduct remote meetings may be unfamiliar to some members, the following annexes seek to set out the ground rules for successful use, including governance, joining and using Zoom and meeting etiquette.

Yours sincerely,



Guy Fetherstonhaugh QC

c.c. Bar Liaison Committee
Co-opted Committee and Sub-Committee members
Committee Secretaries



ANNEX 1: GOVERNANCE

The following key points from The Chartered Governance Institute¹ indicate how virtual meetings can be used to best effect:

1. The technology used must be accessible and fit for purpose

After reviewing various software options, the Inn has acquired educational licenses for [Zoom](#), a multi-platform access video/teleconferencing facility through which committee meetings, and possibly some educational webinars, can be hosted. Information on how to access and use Zoom has been provided below.

2. Virtual meetings must be well structured and all those attending should have the opportunity to prepare for the meeting

Committee Chairs will continue to prepare and approve agendas and papers in consultation with Committee Secretaries for circulation to members in advance of meetings. Chairs have received guidance on managing virtual meetings.

3. All meeting participants should adhere to ground rules and good boardroom practices to ensure an orderly meeting

Virtual meeting etiquette guidance has been provided below. This will be circulated to all committee members and made available on the Members' Area of the Inn's website.

In March 2020, amid the Coronavirus pandemic, Master Treasurer determined that on the basis of Bench Table Order (BTO) 1.4 ("The Treasurer shall decide all cases of doubt or difficulty in the carrying into effect of these Orders"), and given the unique circumstances, quorums specified for Bench Table and other committee meetings could be met through attendance by video/teleconferencing until further notice².

In a further change to procedure for Bench Table and Parliaments, Governing Benchers will be required to indicate whether or not they will attend a meeting to ensure that the quorum (20 or 30 in the case of changes to the BTOs) can be reached and to give a clearer idea of the expected representation of Governing Benchers at these meetings. Details about how to register or provide apologies will be circulated in advance of each meeting.

¹ "The Chartered Governance Institute is the qualifying and membership body for governance with over 125 years' experience of educating and supporting governance professionals. With a Royal Charter purpose of leading 'effective and efficient governance and administration of commerce, industry and public affairs', we provide professional development, guidance and thought leadership, and work with regulators and policy makers to champion high standards." [Guidance available here](#).

² Proposals for amendments to the Bench Table Orders will follow in due course.

ANNEX 2: HOW TO JOIN AND USE ZOOM

Those who are already familiar with videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom should skip this section.

You will be sent a link via email and a calendar invitation to join a Zoom meeting. If you have never used Zoom before, you can click that link at any point before the meeting is due to start, allowing you to download the software in advance.

If you do not have a computer, tablet or phone with a camera, you have tight limits on the amount of internet data you can use on your Wi-Fi or mobile connection, or you just do not feel comfortable taking part with video, you can join by phone. The telephone number and meeting PIN will be sent to you as part of the invite: the process is virtually the same as calling the Inn's existing conference call facility.

We find you get the very best experience using Zoom on a **PC or Mac** with a webcam and microphone. Most modern laptops will have these, but not all desktops do. You can usually spot the lens recessed above the screen. You can download the app (Zoom Client for Meetings) from Zoom's download page at zoom.us/download – your web browser will also prompt you to open the app when you try to join a meeting.

If you do not have such a device, Zoom is also very suitable on tablets like **ipads**, or even on smartphones like **iPhones** or phones that run **Android**. You can download Zoom from the [app store for iPads and iPhones here](#), on [google play here](#) and on the [amazon app store here](#).

When you open the Zoom app, please note that **there is no need to make an account** if you do not want one or have one already. Simply click on the 'Join Meeting' link on the Zoom website and enter the code you have been given, or tap the link straight from the invitation.

Please join the call in plenty of time, at least 10 minutes before the start, so that if you have any connection issues you have time to resolve them.

Depending on how your meeting has been set up, your camera and or mic may not be enabled when you first join the meeting. You can control this with the *Start Video* and *Join Audio* buttons in the bottom left of your screen.

It is essential that your microphone is muted at all times unless you are speaking. This will reduce disruption from background noise, which is far greater than you might think. You can mute your microphone using the appropriate button on your screen. If your microphone is muted, and you need to say something quickly, you can also hold the space bar to temporarily unmute yourself. Those joining the meeting by telephone should mute their devices as well.

If you need to step away, or need to turn your attention away from the meeting for a moment, you may also wish temporarily to turn off your camera via the *stop video* button on your screen. Please note that **stopping video and muting is not the same as leaving the meeting** – you will still be able to see and hear proceedings.

If an item on the agenda calls for a decision, the Chair may ask committee members to indicate their support or, if the matter is not thought to be contentious, they may ask for any indications of dissent. The usual show of hands will need to be replaced by spoken assent (or dissent) by

committee members participating by audio only or by telephone. In some instances, the Chair may wish to make use electronic means of indication assent or dissent. This might include Zoom polling, a feature that enables the Committee Secretary to circulate single choice or multiple-choice polling questions to online participants. Polls can be conducted anonymously. If there is no consensus, then as with a physical meeting the Chair will determine the best course of action. In some instances, the use of virtual meeting polls might not be appropriate and in those cases, a formal ballot may be called. In the case of a ballot called at a Parliament or Bench Table under BTO 37.2, “This shall be conducted and the vote shall be taken in such manner as the Treasurer shall direct but so that not more than three weeks shall elapse between the requisition and the conclusion of the vote.”

ANNEX 3: VIRTUAL MEETING ETIQUETTE

Practical points in preparation for a virtual meeting:

- Ensure that your device(s) are sufficiently charged
- Ensure your location is well lit if using video
- Switch your mobile phone (and other devices) onto silent mode
- If possible, attend the meeting in a quiet space, away from family members and pets. Let the other members of your household know that you will be in a virtual meeting and when you are likely to be finished
- Gather in advance any papers or equipment you might need for the meeting
- It is not recommended to eat during meetings as the noises are likely to be disruptive

Electronic copies of the agenda and papers for a meeting will be sent as a matter of course. Papers will not be sent by post unless on request to the committee secretary. In the case of the Coronavirus lockdown, staff are probably not physically present in the Inn's offices and, during this period, no hard copies of papers can be distributed. Committee members should either print a copy of the papers for reference during the meeting or (ideally, in view of the Inn's green aspirations) arrange for the papers to be available for them to view on a separate screen.

It is difficult to move between a video conference facility and electronic copies of agenda and papers using the same screen. Committee members may require more than one screen or device – one for reading their papers and another for video input. If this is not easy to achieve then use of audio only or telephone participation may be a better option.

At the beginning of a meeting, the Chair will ask all participants to announce themselves and check whether they can hear clearly. **You will probably be able to hear and communicate better if you are using a headset.**

If you join a meeting when it has already started, please make your presence known to the Chair.

Identify yourself at the start of each intervention, particularly in large meetings. This is especially important if you are joining by telephone or on audio only.

The speaker in a Zoom conference will be identified by a coloured edging to their photo. While someone is speaking, **please do not speak** – because the other participants will be unable to hear either of you. If you are using the video function and wish to make an interjection, please raise your hand until invited by the Chair. Try not to speak across others or interrupt and where possible wait to be invited to speak by the Chair. If you do start to speak at the same time as someone else, pause and offer them the opportunity to go first. The Chair should come back to you. If not try again once the other person has finished.

Some of us are more softly spoken than others, but even the clearest of voices can be obscured over the telephone. **Please take care to slow down the rhythm of your speech and to take pauses.**

If there is a natural pause in the room, the Chair will take steps to reassure those on video/teleconference if pauses are natural silences, where items are being checked, or if there are technical difficulties. In the case of the latter, the Committee Secretary may need to step in to assist and this may be done through direct text messaging through Zoom with the committee member. The Chair will determine how to proceed with a meeting in the event of a technical failure.

At end of meeting, the Chair will check who is still on the line and invite you to send any feedback on the meeting to the Committee Secretary.

Where possible and/or necessary, the Chair will summarise agreed actions at the end of the meeting, and, in closing a meeting, seek to establish whether any callers wish for points they may have missed to be repeated or clarified.

Many committee members will already be familiar with Zoom and other video/teleconferencing apps and software. We would welcome any substantive feedback on how the system and our guidance is working for you so that we can continue to refine and improve our processes.
Please contact your Committee's Secretary.