



Factsheet

Information Technology and Online Meetings

Wiltshire Community-Led Housing is an independent support service for organisations who want to learn more about Community-Led Housing in Wiltshire and Swindon.

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www.wiltshirecommunityledhousing.org.uk

Tips for Information Technology (IT)

Microsoft Office 365 is a universal IT tool for managing all the business needs of your community led homes group. Microsoft periodically offers heavily discounted annual subscription rates for all the software you will need for getting your project set up and running.

Microsoft Teams online meeting software is part of the package and compatible across a wide range of user groups and electronic devices. One MS Office 365 subscription can cover many users. Annual subscriptions for not-for-profits can be less than £100 per annum. Google Workspace may also meet your needs.

Both Microsoft Office 365 and Google Workspace IT packages offer secure online document storage at additional cost.

Groups can also make use of open source software such as OpenOffice as a Microsoft office alternative and Thunderbird for email.

Tips for Virtual Meetings

On occasions where a face-to-face meeting cannot occur, it is possible to hold a meeting virtually. Remote access to meetings can also help ease difficulties when members are in different locations and meetings are held at a time not everyone required can attend in person.

To try and make it easier to run virtual meetings and facilitate remote access, we have compiled this guide to try to help make your virtual meetings effective.

Some example applications can be found (right). Please note this guide will need to be read in conjunction with guidance from the software provider for the application you use for your meetings.

Skype for Business

www.skype.com

Zoom

www.zoom.com/

Microsoft Teams

www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/

Google Chat

workspace.google.com/intl/en_uk/products/chat/

Jitsi

www.jitsi.org

Tutorials for all of these programmes can be found online, either by searching for tutorials on the website of the software provider itself, or by searching the keyword 'tutorial' alongside the name of the virtual meeting software you are planning to use for your group meetings in a search engine e.g. Google or on YouTube.

Tips for All Meeting Attendees

Try to find a quiet space if you can.

- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking to help everyone hear each other.
- Give everyone a chance to speak.
- Close any unnecessary screens if you are going to share your desktop.
- Use the instant message chat facility to ask questions or notify the meeting if you have issues hearing what is being said.
- Stay focused on the meetings, avoid multi-tasking, switch off notifications.

For most meetings the key things everyone needs to know at the end are:

- What the key actions and next steps are.
- Who is responsible for following up on each item or action.
- When those actions are due.
- When the next meeting or check-in will be.
- Encourage participation from everyone, asking for key updates or opinions from each person by name to ensure everyone has a say.
- Arrange times to catch up and chat as a team or one-to-one outside of formal meetings.

Tips for the Meeting Organiser

- Create an agenda and circulate this ahead of time if possible.
- Keep meetings as short as possible.
- Share guidance on how to join the meeting and support those who may not have done this before - guides are available online.
- Decide who will be taking notes or minutes (if needed) and where to store them.
- Decide and outline the protocols for the meeting e.g. should questions be kept to the end or asked any time? Should the instant message function be used to ask questions, rather than asking them out loud during the meeting.
- Acknowledge everyone in the meeting and spend a few minutes at the beginning checking in with everyone, if possible.
- If you are using slides you may need to adjust them to ensure slide text is readable (use larger fonts and less text per slide).
- Some online meeting tools such as Zoom and Teams (see page 2) allow you to record the meeting which can be useful for those who are unable to attend, as well as a record of the meeting itself. Before recording a meeting, you should ensure you have permission from all meeting attendees.
- Copies of slides and notes from any presentation should be shared with meeting participants (and those who were absent) after the meeting, alongside the minutes and any actions outstanding.