

City of Wolverhampton Council School Admission Appeals

A Guide to Virtual Meetings



1. Introduction

People's physical presence in the same space has a significant impact on behaviour; and we will need to think carefully about how "normal" meeting activity will need to change.

The role of the Chair and the Clerk will be especially important during an online appeal.

Teams is the system recommended for hosting remote / virtual meetings. It has functionality for audio, video, and screen sharing and you do not need to be a member of an organisation (or have a Teams account) to join a Teams meeting.

2. Documents

Printed copies of agendas will still be sent to Panel Members at least 5 days before the appeal hearing is due to take place.

3. Setting up the Meeting

This will be done by the Appeals or Democratic Services officer. We will send a meeting request via Microsoft Teams. A Democratic Services Officer will also help to facilitate the meeting and to support the Chair and Clerk.

4. Joining the Meeting

Panel members are encouraged to join the meeting at least 30 minutes before the first hearing of the day in order to avoid disrupting the meeting. Parents attending an appeal will be given a time to attend that is between 15 to 20 minutes before the actual start time. This will give the Democratic Services Officer time to check that the appellant has received all of the information, that there is no additional information and to explain the process to be followed. This will also allow time to contact any parent who has not joined the meeting at the allocated time and to phone them to confirm if they are attending.

All attendees should use the link within the calendar invite for the meeting which will say 'Join Microsoft Teams Meeting', which will open the Microsoft Teams app on the laptop/tablet automatically or if not downloaded open the meeting on the web.

For a step by step guide to joining the meeting please see [Appendix A](#).

5. The Role of the Chair

The Chair will use the Chair's script to:

- a) Introduce all of the attendees and the role that they will play in proceedings;**
- b) Confirm what the meeting is about, the process to be followed (including who will speak when), the decision-making process, the possible outcomes and when and how these outcomes will be communicated;**
- c) Check that everyone in the meeting has the same information and has received all of the required paperwork;**
- d) Reinforce that the meeting is confidential and that only those who have been invited should be present and all recording devices must be turned off.**
- e) Check that everyone understands all of the above, is capable and prepared to continue and has understood what has been said.**

The Chair will ask all panel members, appellants and officers to turn off all unnecessary microphones, unless they are speaking. This prevents background noise, coughing etc which is intrusive and disruptive during the meeting.

6. Preparing for the meeting: practical arrangements

Immediately prior to the meeting, participants will need to make sure that they are ready to take part productively:

- Ensure that you are dialling in from an area in your home where you are less likely to be disturbed;
- Ensure that your background is neutral (a blank wall is best). Teams videoconferencing software provides a facility to blur the background to provide privacy and avoid distractions;
- Your name (possibly your mobile number, if you are calling from a phone) is likely to be shown onscreen if you are appearing in video – ensure that you are comfortable with whatever information is being displayed. Chairs might want to invite participants to introduce themselves at the beginning of every meeting anyway;
- Ensure that the camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of your face. This may involve thinking about lighting in the room you're in (for example, sitting in front of a window may plunge your face into shadow). It may also involve putting your webcam, laptop or tablet on top of a couple of books so that you can look into the camera face on;
- Ensure that you are familiar with the functions of the software you are using to dial in. This will include the ability to mute your microphone. As a general rule you should always have your microphone muted when you are not speaking.

7. Phone Conferencing

The Regulations allow for people to join meetings by phone rather than by video. But this presents its own challenges as audio-only communication is less effective than video communication but for some meetings and some individuals it will be the only possibility. In any case phone conferencing will be preferable to the written appeal process.

8. Shortcomings relating to audio-only calls

- Active participation. It is too easy for audio-only participants to be forgotten or for them to find it difficult to “break in” to a flowing committee conversation.
- Engagement. It is far less easy to remain active engaged in meetings on voice-only calls. People’s attention can and will wander. Audio-only communication can be difficult and alienating for those attempting to “observe” or seeking to contribute as witnesses or members of the public. It is easy to lose track of who is talking and who is “in the room”.
- Following the agenda. With no way of sharing screens, it will be difficult to see if people are following presentations and reports (or whether they even have that material in front of them). This will make certain meetings – planning, licensing, and quasi-judicial meetings such as education appeals – a particular challenge.

9. There are ways around these challenges.

- Such meetings will require more preparation, and more people may need to be involved in that preparation.
- Agendas and officer reports in particular will need to be focused with outcomes and objectives very clear. Decision-making meetings in particular will demand this approach.
- The Chair may need to speak individually to members of the Panel beforehand to agree focus and questioning themes – this may also include discussion of the structure of the meeting and whether there are specific things that individual members want to raise.

10. Technical issues

In the event that the Chair, Clerk or Democratic Services Officer identifies a failure of the remote participation facility, the Chair should declare a recess while the fault is addressed.

If it is not possible to address the fault then the meeting may need to be abandoned

11. Disability

It is also important to ensure that the needs of any disabled members are taken into account when considering the practicality of a remotely attended meeting.

User Guide: Microsoft Teams Online Meetings

Joining a Microsoft Teams Meeting

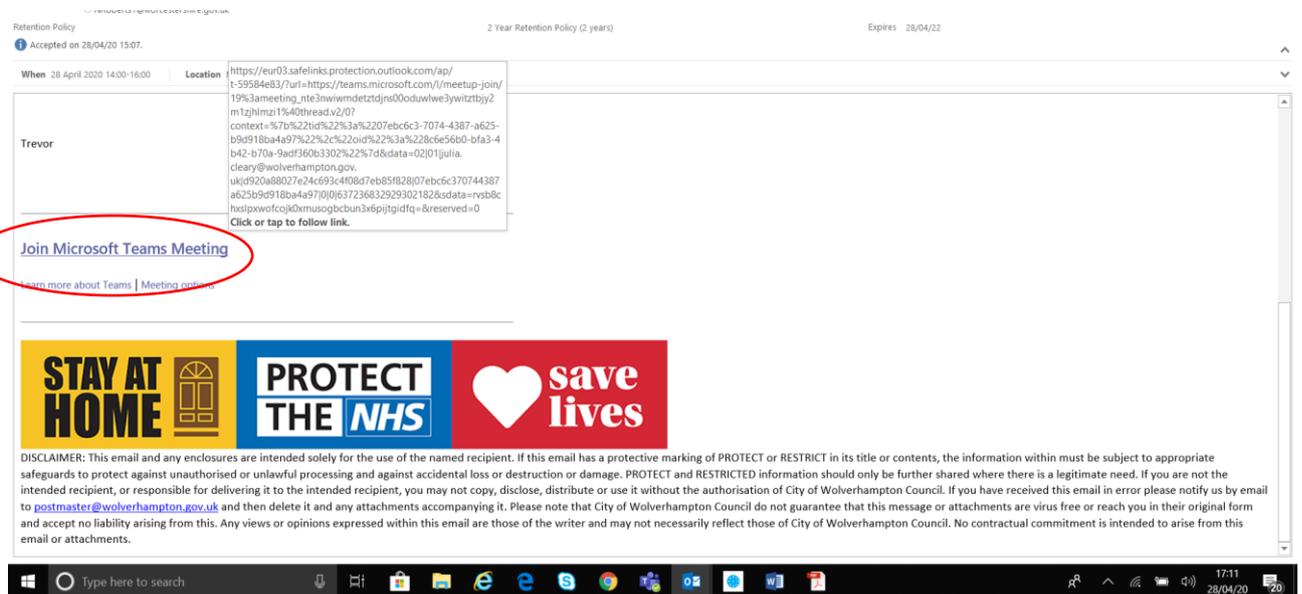
The procedure outlined below should be followed when attending a meeting via Microsoft Teams. It is intended for public distribution to assist with the conducting of Virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams. Prior to the Meeting, Sign Up and Download Microsoft Teams [here](#).

When using Microsoft Teams, please ensure the following:

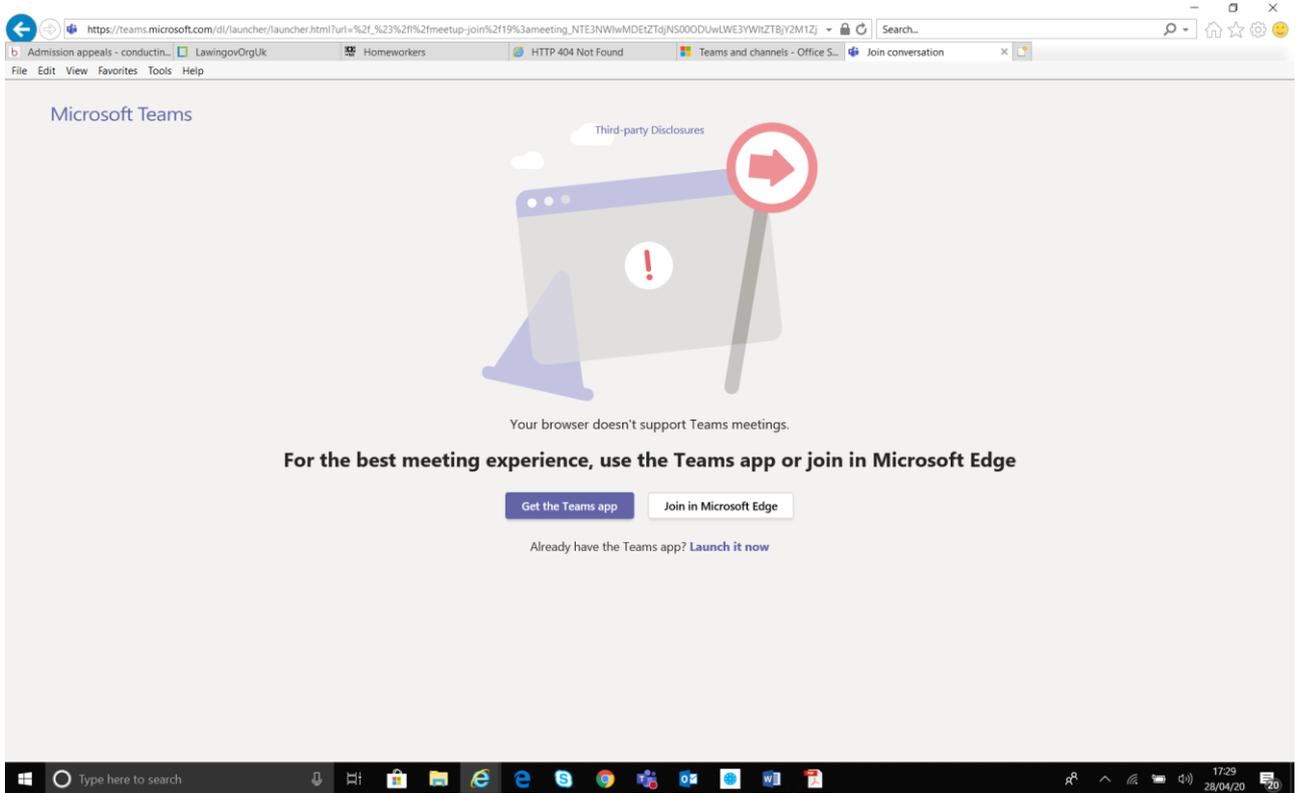
- That you are in a private, quiet space where you will not be disturbed.
- You should attend the meeting alone, unless you are sat together with another attendee.
- Choose a room that has good Wi-Fi/internet connection.
- Choose a room that has good lighting.
- Check your Camera and Microphone are working.
- To test your camera – type camera into the search bar.
- To test your microphone – type ‘microphone set-up’ into the search bar
- If you are experiencing a technical difficulty and/or need to get the attention of the ‘Host’, use the chat feature (click onto speech bubble).

To join the meeting, select Calendar, then click onto the meeting invite or access your emails and click on the invite in there.

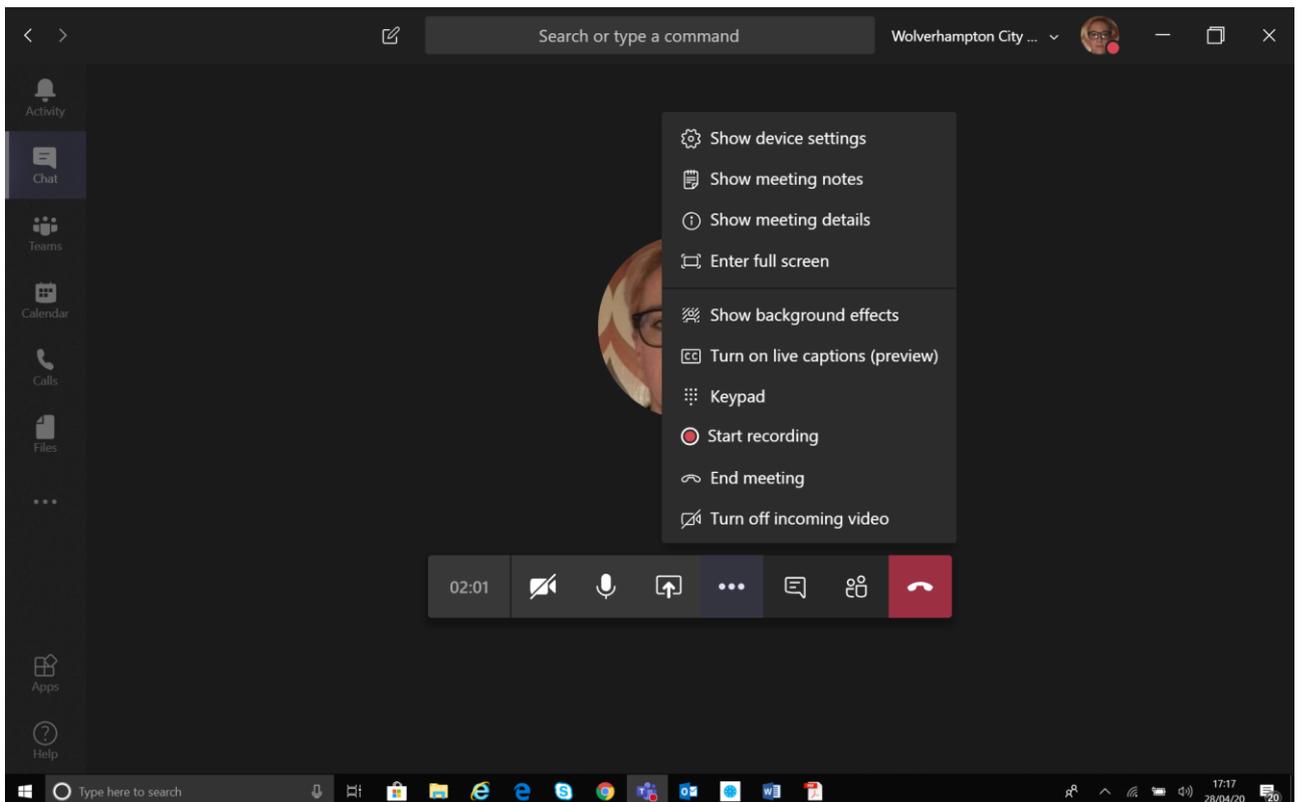
If you want to connect via Microsoft Teams, select ‘Join Microsoft Teams Meeting’.



You can either connect via the Teams app or web browser.



You will then see this screen (the camera is turned off here)



Notes to consider:

You can adjust your microphone and camera before joining the event.

If you want to connect via telephone, call the telephone number and enter the unique Conference ID provided for your meeting when prompted to

Microsoft Teams

Join Microsoft Teams Meeting

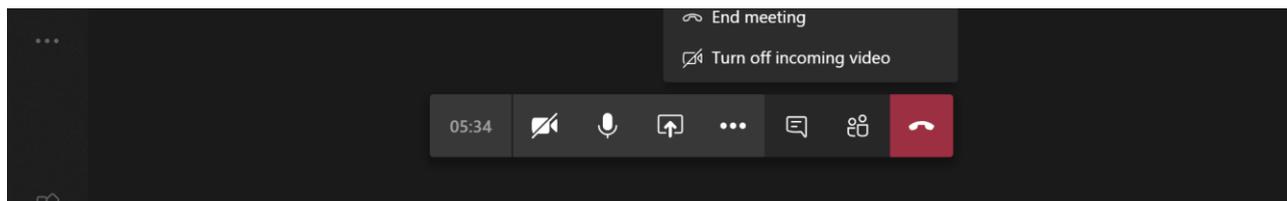
+44 20 3787 4277 United Kingdom, London (Toll)

Conference ID: 710 377 608#

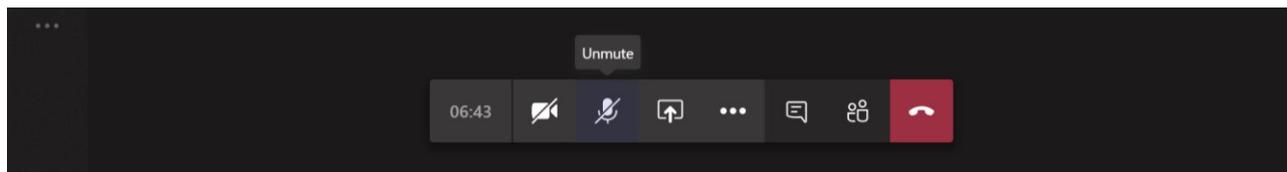
During the meeting, when you are not speaking please mute the audio, failure to do so may disrupt the meeting.

- To mute/unmute click on the microphone symbol.
- If you need to do something that might distract the meeting you can turn your camera on/off by clicking the Camera icon

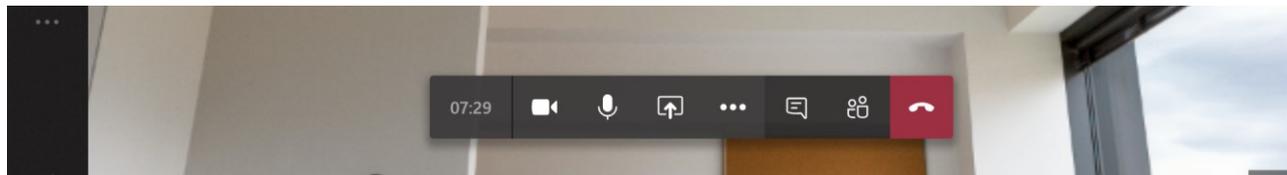
Camera off and Microphone on:



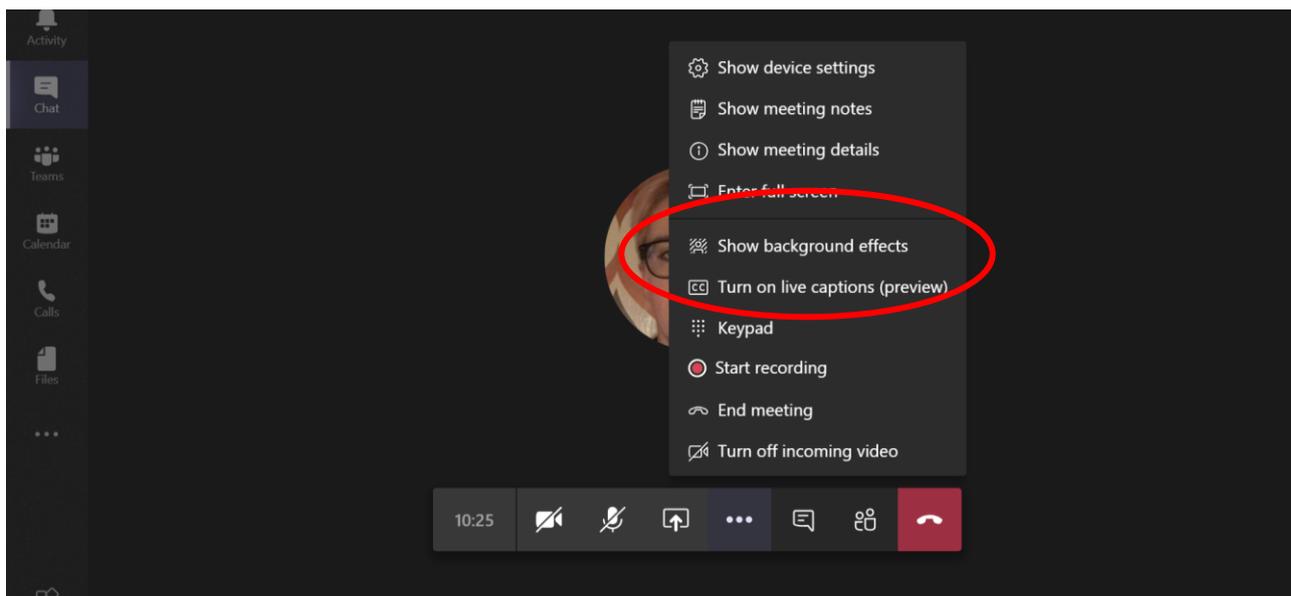
Camera and Microphone off:



Camera and Microphone on:



You can blur or change your background here:



All participants should have the relevant documents for the meeting in front of them physically or on their computer.

Teams will continue to run in the background (with microphone and video on) even if the participant is looking at a document in a different window.

Meeting Etiquette Reminder

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Remember to unmute your microphone when invited to speak by the Chair.
- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name).
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.