

PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF MIDDLESEX

E COMP PETER R A BAKER, GRAND SUPERINTENDENT

RESUMPTION OF MEETINGS

These notes are to assist you regarding the resumption of meetings following the lifting of the suspension with effect from 17 July 2020

They assume that Centres will not be open for business until 1 September 2020

Please take the time to read all these notes

1. **Meetings missed due to suspension:** If your Chapter was due to meet during the suspension period but was unable to do so then you should enter the following in the Chapter's Minute Book:

"As a result of the suspension, owing to the Coronavirus pandemic, by the ME The First Grand Principal (in his capacity as Grand Master) of all meetings from 17 March to 17 July 2020 the Chapter was unable to meet during that period."

2. **Social Distancing & other safety measures:** Social Distancing will be maintained in all Masonic Centres and at meetings.

Each of the Masonic Centres in the Province will issue Guidelines as to the safety measures adopted at that Centre (which may include staggered start times).

3. **Resumption of meetings:** Your regular meetings must recommence and you should send out summonses, as you would normally – but be prepared for such meetings to be abandoned if a quorum cannot be achieved.
4. **Note that you cannot cancel or simply not hold a meeting:** A summons must be issued in accordance with the Chapter's by-laws for every regular convocation (Regulation 58). You may hold your meeting on a different date at your usual Centre without dispensation but should you wish to hold it at a different location, because of circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, to that stated in your by-laws then you will have to apply for a Dispensation in the usual way, for which no fee will be charged.

A meeting may be abandoned should you fail to reach a quorum.

5. **Numbers attending the meeting:** The permitted maximum number attending a meeting is **30 (THIRTY)**.

However, the number that may actually attend is governed by the physical size of each Temple at the Centre where you meet. The Centres will provide details of the maximum attendees permitted.

You should therefore take particular notice of those who propose to attend your meeting and if necessary, you and your 1st Principal will have to decide who you will ask not to attend so as to not exceed the maximum.

Note that you should also count attendances by your VO or a Chain making an Official Visit. For the time being a Chain will attend with his (P)ProvDepGDC but without an escort.

6. **Before you issue your summons:** You must discuss with the centre the likely number attending and agree the room allocated for your meeting and meeting start-time, so that you may advise your members

accordingly. Therefore, you may find it useful to take a straw-poll amongst your members to establish their likely attendance in advance of the discussion.

Your straw-poll might also include asking your members for their opinions about matters included on the agenda if he is unable to attend.

7. **Meeting Number:** It is common practice for summonses to refer to the “nth” meeting of the Chapter. Since you have not been able to meet, you cannot count the meetings which were suspended by the ME 1st Grand Principal. Thus, your numbering will continue from your last regular meeting held.
8. **A) Quorum to open a Chapter:** The minimum number attending is **FIVE** and all of the following conditions must be satisfied.

There must be **TWO subscribing members of the Chapter present plus THREE others, which may include visitors but excludes the Janitor** (and candidate – but as Exaltation ceremonies cannot be carried out a candidate would not be present in any event).

1st Principal (Z): If your 1st Principal is not attending the meeting his Chair may be occupied by one of the following and in this order:

- Immediate Past 1st Principal (IPZ)
- The Senior Past 1st Principal of the Chapter
- A Past 1st Principal who is a subscribing member of the Chapter
- A Past 1st Principal who is a subscribing member of another Chapter.

Note that whoever occupies the 1st Principal’s chair must be a subscribing member of a Chapter. If you are unable to satisfy this condition you do not have a quorum.

2nd and 3rd Principals (H & J) & Treasurer: These chairs may be occupied by any suitably qualified companion (who may be, for instance, a visitor). Likewise, any Companion may be asked to act as Treasurer.

Please note that if you do not have THREE suitably qualified Principals you do not have a Quorum

B) Quorum to open a conclave of Installed Principals: The requirement is **THREE INSTALLED PRINCIPALS** (Installation of J) but no Conclave of Installed First (to install MEZ) or Second Principals (to install H) may be opened unless there are at least two such Principals present (excluding the particular Principal Elect). The Janitor may act as one of the Installed 1st or 2nd Principals provided he is qualified. In such circumstance another Companion must act as Janitor temporarily.

9. **On-line meetings:** Guidance has been issued previously but for the sake of completeness:
 - No part of a ‘called on’, tyled meeting may be transmitted in any form.
 - If ALL members physically present agree, the Chapter, having been opened, may be ‘called off’ and transmitted, subject to password protection, to members unable to be present,
 - For the discussion of administrative business only.
 - Once the transmission has ended and the Chapter has been called on again those physically present may vote on that business (but having regard to the views expressed by those not present).,
 - Lectures/talks may be given on-line but subject to the above requirements being met and care should be taken that the content does not impart any Masonic secret.
 - The agreement to transmit the discussion must be recorded in the Minutes.

10. **Singing at meetings:** For the time being and until further notice there will be no singing at meetings.
11. **Festive Board:** No Festive Board may be held. Chapters **MUST NOT** attempt to organise a collective meal for their members, since this breaches the Government guidance on visiting restaurants in groups of more than 2 households (or 6 people if the meal is held outside).
12. **Chapters of Instruction:** Strictly speaking, the availability of a suitable COI room is a matter for the Centre at which it is held. However, it is Province's recommendation that you do not hold COIs for the time being. Also note that SGC is absolutely clear that COIs should not be held on-line (Zoom, for instance). Generally, LOI rooms are small and perambulations are, in most cases, impossible without breaking social distancing guidelines; multiple COIs (and LOIs) together with regular meetings in a centre on one evening creates a challenge for social distancing in common areas; and the room has to be cleaned after each use which, apart from being impractical, adds to their costs at a time when the centre's income is particularly challenging.
13. **Election of Principals/Installation:** The Royal Arch regulations are very forgiving and the answer is not as complex as you might encounter in Craft.

- **A) An election was held before suspension, but installation did not take place:**

Regulation 48 provides that any Principal not installed on the regular date shall be installed at the next Convocation of the Chapter at which he may be present. The next Convocation could be an emergency convocation (for which no dispensation is required provided that it is held at the Chapter's regular place of meeting – Regulation 59). Should you wish to meet at another venue then you must apply for the usual dispensation.

- **B) An election could not take place because of suspension:**

In simple terms the Principals can be elected and installed at the next regular meeting (but notice of the election and installation must be given on the summons)

[For the technically minded the Royal Arch Regulations make no provision for failure to elect Principals and therefore under Regulation 73 the Book of Constitutions applies. Rule 106 provides that the situation is dealt with in the same way as if the Master Elect had died etc., which in turn refers you back to Regulation 54, which allows Principals to be elected (of which notice must be given on the summons); and they can be installed forthwith.]

14. **Election & investiture of Treasurer / Janitor:** Provided the election appears on the agenda printed in your summons you may elect and invest the Treasurer and Janitor at your next regular meeting.

With regard to your Janitor, it is quite possible that he might be elderly or vulnerable and perhaps a little reluctant to return to his duties and potentially expose himself to the virus. In such cases, you may have to rely on a Companion of your Chapter to stand-in.

A request by the ME Grand Superintendent was issued previously asking Chapters to consider making ex-gratia payments to their Janitor during suspension. It is hoped that the very encouraging willingness to do so means that this will continue upon resumption of meetings in the circumstances outlined above.

15. **Principal's eligibility for progression:** Provided that a year will have elapsed since you were elected as 2nd / 3rd Principal and have been installed before the next election is held. Even if you cannot satisfy the latter condition, the Grand Superintendent has power under Regulation 50 to grant a dispensation.

16. **If you have read this far:** thank you for your kind attention. The Province wishes you the very best in these challenging times and hope you welcome the return to Freemasonry and that your meetings are fun.

Much of what we do and how we cope with restrictions, as a consequence of the pandemic, will be governed by common sense. However, if you have any questions then please direct them to the Provincial Office (office@pglm.org.uk) and we will do our best to answer them.