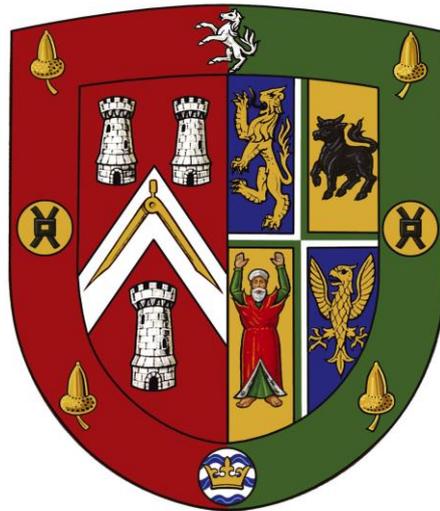


Province of West Kent



Return to Masonic Labours Information for Lodge Secretaries

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Introduction

You are all aware that on the 17th March 2020 the Grand Master suspended all Masonic activity due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Unfortunately, this has left lots of Lodges with unfinished administrative business.

Now, with the announcement from UGLE and subsequent lifting of the suspension on the 17th July 2020 Secretaries need to start planning for the resumption of their meetings. This of course involves completing where possible that unfinished administrative business and to conform to the requirements of the Book of Constitutions, which to assist in these arrangements the Provincial Secretariat has compiled this “Return to Masonic Labours” guide.

Minute Books

Now that the suspension has come to an end any Lodge that was due to meet during the period of the suspension but was prevented from doing so, must enter into the Lodge Minute Book a statement substantially in the following form.

The Lodge Secretary should record:

“As a result of the suspension, owing to the Coronavirus Pandemic, by the Most Worshipful, The Grand Master of all meetings from the 17th March 2020 to the 17th July 2020, the Lodge was unable to meet during this period.”

Quorums

A Lodge needs a quorum present to hold a valid meeting.

In a Lodge the number to form a quorum is Five. This excludes the Tyler and any Candidate.

The Five must include an Installed Master and two members of the Lodge.

The Installed Master does not need to be a member of the Lodge and he may take the chair if requested to do so by the Lodge in the absence of the Master (Rule 119(b)).

If on the day of the meeting a quorum cannot be achieved, then the meeting must be abandoned, and a note accordingly entered into the Minute Book as detailed further in this guide.

Dispensations

The Provincial Grand Master has waived all charges for dispensations where that dispensation is required due to the Coronavirus Pandemic up to the 31st December 2020.

However, although no charges will be imposed you must still apply for any dispensations when required in the normal manner.

Abandoning a Meeting

The Book of Constitutions (Rule 137) provides that there is no power to cancel a regular meeting of a Lodge.

Now that the suspension has come to an end a Summons must be issued in accordance with the Lodge by-laws for every regular meeting held after 17th July 2020. A breach of this regulation may result, at the discretion of the Provincial Grand Master, in disciplinary action being taken against the Lodge under Rule 179.

If, when the Summons has been issued it becomes clear to the Secretary that the number of apologies is such that a quorum will be unattainable, there will be no point in Brethren making an unnecessary journey. He should therefore tell the members so, and then at the moment the Lodge is due to be opened and not before, he may presume a lack of a quorum and treat the meeting as abandoned.

The Secretary must not merely assume that the members do not wish the Lodge to meet.

If the meeting is abandoned the Secretary should record the following in the Minute book:

“The regular meeting of the Lodge on, 2020 was duly called in accordance with the attached Summons. Owing to the incidence of the Coronavirus the required number of Brethren to open the Lodge could not be assembled and the meeting was abandoned”.

Abandoned meetings cannot be rescheduled. Any necessary business can be transacted at an emergency meeting unless it is business that must be done at a regular meeting.

Masonic Centres

Masonic Centres have a lot of work to do preparing for reopening and planning to operate within the Government Guidelines including social distancing. They will have to produce a risk assessment prior to opening and you should ensure that you and your members are aware and comply with the requirements of the centre.

Whilst at present the limitation on numbers attending meetings is 30 this may be reduced by individual Centres where this is needed to make the venue Covid secure. Ensure you are aware of any restrictions of numbers and that you have a process in place to restrict attendance to that number.

Most centres are currently closed, and it is envisaged that many will not be Covid secure until January 2021 at the earliest. You do need to check with Centres on their planned reopening date in case it will be closed on your regular meeting dates.

The Centre at which you meet is named in your by-laws, if on the date of your regular meeting that Centre is closed you should make every reasonable effort to find another Masonic Centre that is open and Covid secure. You will need to arrange a dispensation from the Provincial Office to meet at a different Centre to that named in your by-laws.

Where this is not possible or practicable the meeting will have to be abandoned because it will obviously be impossible to achieve a quorum.

However, a Summons must be issued for the meeting at the regular Centre against the possibility that it may be open by the date of the meeting. Once it is apparent to the Secretary that either the Centre will not be open, or the apologies received means that a quorum will not be attainable, the meeting must be abandoned as outlined above.

Warrants

You may not have access to your regular meeting place in order to obtain your Warrant which is required to be produced at every meeting to conform to Rule 101.

In this instance a temporary Warrant of confirmation in the form of a letter of authority should immediately be sought from the Grand Secretary (Rule 103) where a Lodge intends to hold a meeting at another Centre. This application must be made through the Provincial Grand Secretary.

The temporary Warrant of confirmation must be returned to the Provincial Grand Secretary when no longer required.

Master Elect

Now that the suspension has ended Rule 106 allows a Master to be elected either:

- a) on the regular date of Installation, in which case the Master then elected must be Installed at a further meeting held within five weeks of that date, **or**
- b) at an Emergency meeting held not less than three weeks before the date for the Installation.

If necessary, a Treasurer and a Tyler subject to Rule 113 must be elected and invested with other Officers as per Rule 121.

If a Lodge decides to re-elect the outgoing Master on the regular date of Installation, there is no requirement of an Installation meeting and he can immediately be proclaimed and proceed to invest his Officers.

Installation Meetings

If an Installation meeting is abandoned (or was due during the suspension period) and the new Master could not be installed within five weeks of the abandoned meeting either by an Emergency Meeting or at the next regular meeting then the outgoing Master will continue in Office (Rule 108).

The Master of a Lodge should remain in Office in accordance with his obligation as Master Elect where he has undertaken to fulfil his duties as Master of the Lodge “until the next regular election within the Lodge and until a successor shall have been duly elected and installed in his stead”. It is however highly recommended that, if required, the Past Masters assist and help take burden off the Master.

The Master may invite any duly qualified Brother to occupy the Chair and carry out the work of the Lodge. If the Master fails to do so Rule 119 lays down who is to preside in the Lodge. Where there is no Master in place then the Lodge will be summoned by the Senior Warden who has the authority to do so until the next Master is installed.

If the Master has to continue in Office, and in so doing it will mean him serving three consecutive years, he will need a dispensation unless he is forced to do so by events of which the Lodge has no control such as the suspension period (Rule 115).

At the first meeting held following the resumption the Master must invest his Officers in accordance with Rule 108(b) and an Installation return submitted to the Grand Secretary in accordance with Rule 151.

Completing Ballots for Initiates

Rule 159 states that a Candidate for Initiation must be balloted for at the next regular meeting following the meeting at which he was proposed and seconded, or the proposal shall lapse.

The meaning of next regular meeting relates to the next regular meeting actually held and not the next regular meeting summoned. As such any proposal for Initiates should be on the agenda and balloted at the next regular Lodge meeting actually held.

If that does not happen then the proposal shall lapse and will need to be given again at a regular meeting.

Committee Meetings

There are no limitations on where a Lodge Committee may meet, or that a meeting must be held face to face. It is therefore permissible to hold Committee meetings by electronic means.

However, some consideration should be given to members of the Committee with regards their access to this type of electronic communication.

Remember, Lodge Committees have no Executive powers and may only act within the powers that the Lodge may define, Rule 154.

They cannot approve accounts, only recommend them to the Lodge for approval. They also cannot vote on anything unless they are voting within the Committee on which recommendations that they will make to the Lodge for the Lodge to approve.

Lodge of Instruction

The place of meeting of a Lodge of Instruction is governed by Rule 133 and as such cannot be moved without approval of the Provincial Grand Secretary. However, if this is not possible the Lodge can hold an electronic meeting to discuss and plan future meetings but should not practise ceremonies in this manner.

Entitlement to Centenary Warrants

The suspension period between the 17th March 2020 and the 17th July 2020 will automatically be discounted, as constituting a “force majeure”. From the end of the suspension period a Lodge is only liable to lose its entitlement to a Centenary Warrant if it fails to meet for a whole year (and therefore becomes liable to be erased under Rule 189). Providing that a Lodge has made all reasonable efforts to hold a meeting, a longer period than a year will be disregarded by the Grand Master.

Centenary Meetings

There is no Rule that requires Lodges to celebrate their Centenary on, or near to, the anniversary itself and therefore any celebrations can be postponed until the situation around the Pandemic improves.

The Provincial Office will be contacting those Lodges in due course who have had to either postpone a Centenary Meeting or have one due during 2021 to discuss arrangements and dates.

Exclusions (Rule 181)

During the suspension period you will not have been able to exclude members under BoC Rule 181. In most instances the exclusion is for non-payment of subscriptions for a period as stipulated in your Lodge by-laws.

Lodges would normally be liable for dues and contributions in respect of Brethren whose membership has not been terminated before the start of a new subscription year. However UGLE, through the Board of General Purposes and the Province have decided that, if a Lodge has acted in accordance with Rule 181 and been in a position to exclude if it had met, to waive the amounts of such dues and contributions for the new subscription year in respect of members who could not be excluded earlier due to the suspension. However,

Lodges will be liable if they start or have not completed due process after the end of their financial year.

The Provincial Office has been requested to certify this and you should show that this was the case when submitting your members update form detailing the exclusion.

The exclusions should be by ballot at the next meeting of the Lodge. There is no requirement under Rule 181 for a Notice of Motion to be given at a meeting prior to the meeting at which a ballot is to take place.

You are required however to give the members 10 days' notice in writing of such action. The name of the Brother concerned shall not appear on the written notice to the members but must be made known to the Brethren when the resolution is moved at the meeting.

Provincial Visits

At this present time, Representatives of the Provincial Grand Master will not be attending Installation meetings in their official capacity, and Secretaries will be advised when visits can resume.

You should, however, ensure Installation Returns are completed and forwarded to the Provincial Office, as soon as possible, after the meeting.

Similarly, visits by members of the Craft Executive are under review, however, it is hoped that any special celebration due to take place in 2020 will be postponed and celebrated in 2021.

Provincial Office

The Provincial Office at present remains closed with Administrative staff working from home. If you have any queries you should email them to office@westkentmasons.org.uk

You can also find this document along with other extremely useful information and guidance on the www.westkentmasons.org.uk website.

Updates

This guidance document will be updated when appropriate, and superseded versions will be uploaded to the Website. It is not the intent to email every small update to Secretaries. Please [use this link](#) for the latest guidance.

Useful Craft Email Addresses

The Province has recently added uniformity to its email addresses. Below are the new email addresses for the following Officers:

Mark Estaugh, ProvGM.....	PGM@westkentmasons.org.uk
Mark Eyles-Thomas, DepProvGM.....	DPGM@westkentmasons.org.uk
James Marsh, AsstProvGM	APGM1@westkentmasons.org.uk
Andrew Waddington, AsstProvGM	APGM2@westkentmasons.org.uk
Colin Holland, AsstProvGM.....	APGM3@westkentmasons.org.uk
Daniel Spencer, AsstProvGM	APGM4@westkentmasons.org.uk
Peter Sawyer, ProvGTreas	ProvGTreas@westkentmasons.org.uk
Binoy Karia, ProvGReg	ProvGReg@westkentmasons.org.uk
Paul Christopher, ProvGSec	ProvGSec@westkentmasons.org.uk
Neil Moakes, ProvGAlm	ProvGAlm@westkentmasons.org.uk
Peter Brooker, ProvGChStwd	ProvGChStwd@westkentmasons.org.uk
Neil Dale, ProvGMentor.....	ProvGMentor@westkentmasons.org.uk
Roy Huntley, ProvAGSec	ProvAGSec@westkentmasons.org.uk
Provincial Office	Office@westkentmasons.org.uk
Craft Summons.....	CraftSummons@westkentmasons.org.uk
Warren Muckell, Prov Comms Officer	PCO@westkentmasons.org.uk
Communications Team	Communications@westkentmasons.org.uk
Ian Gallehawk, Head of Membership Development	Membership@westkentmasons.org.uk

Please Note: all Masonic business should be sent to the above email addresses and not to personal addresses, unless otherwise authorised by the individuals.