

# Province of West Kent



## Return to Masonic Labours Information for Chapter Scribes E

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## **Introduction**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Grand Master / First Grand Principal suspended all Masonic activity due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Unfortunately, this has left lots of Chapters with unfinished administrative business.

With the announcement from United Grand Lodge of England / Supreme Grand Chapter, and subsequent lifting of the suspension on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020 Scribes E need to start planning for the resumption of their convocations. This of course involves completing where possible that unfinished administrative business and to conform to the requirements of the Regulations of Supreme Grand Chapter, 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 Chapter that was due to meet during the period of the suspension but was prevented from doing so, must enter into the Chapter Minute Book a statement substantially in the following form.

The Chapter Scribe E should record:

“As a result of the suspension, owing to the Coronavirus Pandemic, by The Most Excellent First Grand Principal (in his capacity as The Grand Master) of all convocations from the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Chapter was unable to meet during this period.”

## **Quorums**

A Chapter needs a quorum present to hold a valid convocation.

In a Chapter the number to form a quorum is Five. This excludes the Janitor (and in normal circumstances any Candidate).

The Five must include two members of the Chapter and three Companions qualified to occupy the Principals’ Chairs. It is not a requirement that any acting Principals be members of the Chapter.

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

## **Dispensations**

The Grand Superintendent has waived all charges for dispensations where that dispensation is required due to the Coronavirus Pandemic up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

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

## **Abandoning a Convocation**

Chapter Regulation 58 provides that there is no power to cancel a regular convocation of a Chapter.

Now that the suspension has come to an end a Summons must be issued in accordance with the Chapter's by-laws for every regular convocation held after 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020. A breach of this regulation may result, at the discretion of the Grand Superintendent, in disciplinary action being taken against the Chapter under Rule 179.

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

The Scribe E must not merely assume that the members do not wish the Chapter to meet.

If the convocation is abandoned the Scribe E should record the following in the Minute book,

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

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

## **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 convocations 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 convocation dates.

The Centre at which you meet is named in your by-laws, if on the date of your regular convocation 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 convocation will have to be abandoned because it will obviously be impossible to achieve a quorum.

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

## **Charters**

You may not have access to your regular convocation place in order to obtain your Charter which is required to be produced at every convocation to conform to Regulation 47.

In this instance a temporary Charter of confirmation in the form of a letter of authority should immediately be sought from the Grand Scribe E where a Chapter intends to hold a convocation at another Centre. This application must be made through the Provincial Grand Scribe E.

The temporary Charter of confirmation must be returned to the Provincial Grand Scribe E when no longer required.

## **Principals Elect**

In Chapter there is no specific regulation that covers a missed election convocation and as such Regulation 73 refers the matter to the Book of Constitutions. There Rule 106 instructs that failure to elect is dealt with in the same way as if a Principal Elect had died. That being the case, Regulation 54 requires Principals to be elected at the next regular convocation meeting to be held. Notice of the Election must be given on the summons. If necessary, a Treasurer and Janitor must be elected and invested with other officers.

Chapters may find it easier to simply re-elect the current Principals, so they can be proclaimed at the following convocation (to be held), and for all the Officers to be re-appointed.

## **Installation Convocations**

If an Installation convocation is abandoned (or was due during the suspension period) then the Principals Elect must be installed at the first regular Convocation that he or they attend (as per Regulation 48). This may be an Emergency Meeting for which no dispensation is required as the Principals alone have the authority to call it (Regulation 59). However, a dispensation will be required if an Emergency Meeting is to be held at a different venue.

In either case an Installation return must then be submitted to the Grand Scribe E in accordance with Regulation 60.

You must have three Installed Principals present if you wish to open a conclave of Installed Principals and where you wish to open a conclave of First or Second Principals, at least two Principals present must be qualified to take those chairs, that is excluding the particular Principal Elect. For this purpose, and if qualified to do so, the Janitor may occupy one of the Installed first or second Principals chairs but where he does another Companion must act as temporary Janitor.

If any Principal is to continue in Office, and in so doing it will mean him serving three consecutive years, he will need a dispensation (Regulation 51).

## **Completing Ballots for Exaltees**

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

The meaning of next regular convocation relates to the next regular convocation actually held and not the next regular convocation summoned. As such, any proposal for Exaltation should be on the agenda and balloted at the next regular Chapter convocation actually held.

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

## **Committee Meetings**

There are no limitations on where a Chapter 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, Chapter Committees have no Executive powers and may only act within the powers that the Chapter may define, Rule 154.

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

## **Chapter of Improvement**

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

## **Entitlement to Centenary Warrants**

The suspension period between the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020 will automatically be discounted, as constituting a “force majeure”. From the end

of the suspension period a Chapter 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 Chapter has made all reasonable efforts to hold a convocation, a longer period than a year will be disregarded by the Grand Master.

## **Centenary Convocations**

There is no Rule that requires Chapters 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 Chapters in due course who have had to either postpone a Centenary Convocation or have one due during 2021 to discuss arrangements and dates.

## **Exclusions (Regulation 71)**

Regulation 71 enables the Chapter to exclude members in accordance with Rule 181 of the Book of Constitutions.

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 Chapter by-laws.

Chapters would normally be liable for dues and contributions in respect of Companions whose membership has not been terminated before the start of a new subscription year. However Supreme Grand Chapter, through the Committee of General Purposes, and the Province have decided that, if a Chapter 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, Chapters 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 Supreme Grand Chapter and Provincial Returns detailing the exclusion.

The exclusions should be by ballot at the next convocation of the Chapter. There is no requirement under Rule 181 for a Notice of Motion to be given at a convocation prior to the convocation 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 Companions concerned shall not appear on the written notice to the members but must be made known to the Companions when the resolution is moved at the convocation.

## **Provincial Visits**

At this present time, Representatives of the Grand Superintendent will not be attending Installation convocations in their official capacity, and Scribes E 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 Royal Arch 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](mailto:Office@westkentmasons.org.uk)

You can also find this document along with other extremely useful information and guidance on the [www.westkentmasons.org.uk](http://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 Scribes E. Please [use this link](#) for the latest guidance.

## Useful Royal Arch Email Addresses

Below are some useful email addresses for the following Officers:

Mark Estaugh, GSupt .....	<a href="mailto:PGM@westkentmasons.org.uk">PGM@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Brian Saunders, DepGSupt.....	<a href="mailto:brianksaunders24@btinternet.com">brianksaunders24@btinternet.com</a>
Alan Cope, 2ndProvGPrin .....	<a href="mailto:alancope@talktalk.net">alancope@talktalk.net</a>
Bipin Patel, 3rdProvGPrin .....	<a href="mailto:bp.bipin@gmail.com">bp.bipin@gmail.com</a>
Michael Page, APGP.....	<a href="mailto:mickpage999@yahoo.co.uk">mickpage999@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Tony Burd, APGP.....	<a href="mailto:tony-burd@hotmail.co.uk">tony-burd@hotmail.co.uk</a>
Paul Christopher, ProvGSE.....	<a href="mailto:ProvGSec@westkentmasons.org.uk">ProvGSec@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Peter Sawyer, ProvGTreas.....	<a href="mailto:ProvGTreas@westkentmasons.org.uk">ProvGTreas@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
David Campbell, ProvGAlm .....	<a href="mailto:paramedicdave@aol.com">paramedicdave@aol.com</a>
Peter Brooker, ProvGChStwd .....	<a href="mailto:ProvGChStwd@westkentmasons.org.uk">ProvGChStwd@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Martin Davies, ProvAGSE .....	<a href="mailto:ProvAGSE@westkentmasons.org.uk">ProvAGSE@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Provincial Office.....	<a href="mailto:Office@westkentmasons.org.uk">Office@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Royal Arch Summons .....	<a href="mailto:RASummons@westkentmasons.org.uk">RASummons@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Warren Muckell, Prov Comms Officer....	<a href="mailto:PCO@westkentmasons.org.uk">PCO@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Communications Team .....	<a href="mailto:Communications@westkentmasons.org.uk">Communications@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>
Ian Gallehawk, Head Membership Development.....	<a href="mailto:Membership@westkentmasons.org.uk">Membership@westkentmasons.org.uk</a>