

Special General Meeting - Thistle Housing's Proposed Zoom Videoconference

I have to say that I was aghast at your information that Thistle Housing was considering a Zoom videoconferencing session to fulfil their requirements regarding Thistle shareholders' call for a Special General Meeting (and presumably, for the Annual General Meeting due to take place in a few weeks).

Thistle is always keen to utilise and interpret the Rules (which they wrote) in their favour and when it suits them. That being the case, there is no allowance, at all, to handle the outcome of the current pandemic in any and all circumstances. They may claim that the Covid outbreak is unusual, which it is, and that these are far from normal times, to which that, in isolation, has no argument. However and again, there is absolutely no provision in the Rules for calling a Special General Meeting (SGM) or indeed, an Annual General Meeting (AGM) via internet connections.

The whole idea of an AGM or SGM, is the calling together of shareholders to discuss a topic, compare notes, if you will, with other shareholders and argue the points raised either for or against and eventually take a vote, a vote which can, if requested, be by ballot as opposed to a show of hands. These circumstances are not only undeniable but are required, otherwise such a meeting cannot be termed as an AGM or SGM.

In the case of Thistle Housing, the AGMs have always been no more than a bingo session for their pals with an AGM inconveniently tacked on. Recent AGMs have been manipulated, bullying sessions at the hand of Thistle, its solicitors, unrecognised and uninvited guests and the dreadful events of last year whereby they managed to rail in two police officers within and three outside thus attempting to intimidate shareholders. Not that any of that worked as well as they had wished!

As a consequence of Thistle's dreadful manipulation of such meetings, voting must henceforth be via ballot, as per the Rules. A videoconference of any description does not afford that action, hence the Rules are yet again, unfulfilled.

Can you imagine, in the unlikely event that a videoconference actually did take place for AGM or SGM purposes, Thistle are once again on the mendacious, losing side of the argument and simply pull the plug. 'Oops, sorry, we can't continue to unforeseen technical difficulties', as Miss Sprott stands there, bemasked, reeking of alcohol (hand sanitiser that is, maybe) with a loose thirteen amp plug in her claw.

As far as the actions and results of a collective Zoom videoconferencing session are concerned, other than the facts stated above which would be at odds with the spirit and the facts of the Rules, I had a long conversation with . As you are aware, and due to the dreadful virus circumstances in , currently and over the past months, has been working from home in flat in . has a state of the art laptop and a fibre broadband connection offering bandwidth of 500 Mbits/sec in both directions, a connection available here only on an extremely expensive commercial basis. company uses various videoconferencing applications, including the commercial, paid for Zoom platform. tells me that despite the infrastructure being used by employer and its staff, all being top end, there are constant problems in maintaining the multitude of links, links

buffering, breaking off, having to be reinstated, etc, etc. Now, [redacted] has two first class honours degrees so is hardly unintelligent (mind you, [redacted] can hardly tie shoe laces or boil and egg!!), [redacted] colleagues, due to the nature of their profession are similarly qualified. It would seem that they all have difficulties with Zoom usually rendering any session useless. Together with this, [redacted] employers do not use Zoom unless there is no immediate alternative and only for rather short sessions and where security is seen as to be not paramount, unless those participating are connected via a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Furthermore, they refuse to allow Zoom to be ported to mobile phones due to the inherent security risks with Zoom, whereby there have been frequent reports of personal data being tampered with, hence the security issues. I explained the proposed use of Zoom by Thistle and why to which [redacted] laughed and asked them if they were mad. I didn't expand that any further.

Thereafter, we setup a Zoom session between us and [redacted] cousin just to give it a go. [redacted] cousin, who stays in [redacted], is a [redacted] and hardly uneducated but had no end of difficulty with the installation and use of the system and the provided supposedly secure addresses to use. [redacted] is on a BT Openreach fibre broadband connection of, ostensibly, suitable specification. [redacted] too had similar problems over the hour or so we attempted to indulge in a reasonable Zoom videoconference. Part of the problem was at my door, insofar as I don't have a broadband connection but use a 4G system and a proxy server and firewall to protect my network (and to offer other security benefits). In simple terms, it was practically unworkable and certainly did not afford any opportunity of discussion which would be a principal requirement during Thistle's proposed online SGM. [redacted] has a VPN connection to my system via [redacted] own personal laptop. [redacted] has it so that I can assist [redacted] if and when and if (and it's usually when) [redacted] buggers up [redacted] laptop's operating system. That two man Zoom connection via VPN worked reasonably well, for as long as approximately six minutes when it all went to hell yet again. Basically, it was unworkable between three parties never mind only two for any session which may have to last, what, an hour? More?

As we were attempting to form a link, I used two diagnostic apps, 'nmap' and 'Wireshark' so that I could peruse the traffic on the connections between [redacted], me and Zoom. I have to say that I was appalled at the amount of unusual traffic and used TCP and UDP ports utilised by Zoom, some of which were on the wrong side of dodgy. Besides that, both my proxy server and firewall were detecting far, far too many inconsistencies. For my part, Zoom is too unreliable and certainly insufficiently secure. I won't be using it for any purpose.

I have, at this point, to chuck in to the discussion, a comment by Grace McColgan, the ex Director of Thistle, who arrogantly announced both verbally and in writing, that '100% of people in Toryglen were not interested in a website or in broadband', that being, of course, as a result of one of Thistle's supposed opinion polls of which no one could ever remember having been part. A very strange outpouring of made up lies from Mrs McColgan and her pack, even stranger when it was, eventually, the internet and the use of social media by the droves of internet connected residents which deservedly brought her down and, when it comes to it, assisted Thistle Housing to commit hara kiri as it drowned in corruption, ineptitude and lies.

This brings me to the practical side of ordinary Toryglen shareholding residents and the use of Zoom (and probably anything similar).

They would require to have a suitable internet connection. With broadband, many Toryglen residents have an ADSL connection via their telephone line. Assuming that is correctly setup

(and that's a huge assumption), they are unlikely to benefit from sufficient bandwidth to fully utilise a long videoconferencing session, at least without having to undergo constant breaks and having to re-establish a link, not to mention the frustration which would ensue. ADSL has a physical bandwidth limit of 24 Mbits/sec and then you would have to be plugged directly into the serving telephone exchange in Queen Street, Rutherglen. The further away a user is from the exchange, the less bandwidth is available. Around Kerrycroy Place/Street/Avenue and even further distant in Ardmory Avenue, broadband ADSL users have around 2 to 3 Mbits/sec available downwards and as little as 400 Kbits/sec upwards, rendering their link practically useless. Another assumption is that they are not connected to their router via ethernet but via wireless and that that is correctly set up, which is seldom, very seldom the case. Note that this applies to those with PCs/laptops and handheld devices utilising wireless.

If shareholders use only a handheld device, such as a smartphone and via a data connection (if they have one), this will vary from 4G dropping down to 3G then to 2G then to EDGE. For a Zoom session to function, there would be a requirement of a strong, interrupted signal, at least on 3G. Anything less is unworkable, Furthermore, they would have to have a data allowance on their SIM plan, an allowance which may be virtually nothing and could easily, if any data limits were broken (video taking up substantial bandwidth hence data), they could end up being charged ridiculous amounts by their mobile provider. Again, this would suggest and unworkable method.

If handheld devices are used via the shareholder's wireless connection to their router, even if they do have a fast Virgin Broadband connection, once again, the variability of wireless comes into play. Wireless can be and frequently is negatively affected by baby alarms, microwaves, cheap CCTV cameras and a whole host of other miscellaneous devices, not to mention the son in the bedroom hammering the hell of of an online game and thus sucking up all of the bandwidth. Yet again, too many negative possibilities for a reliable videoconferencing session to work.

There is a massive underlying assumption that the shareholders' hardware is even capable of sustaining a link, not to mention the required ability to install changes to this hardware and to utilise an advertised link on a browser which is as sure as hell jammed with crud, cookies and other assorted crap.

All of this requires a minimum level of knowledge on the part of shareholders, a minimum level which is not small. Do you think they have it? I doubt it. Thistle has always assumed that Toryglen residents were thick, so there you have it, not feasible (although that assumption on the part of Thistle has hardly stood them in good stead). Take you, for example and I know, all too well, your use of a smartphone. Other than the security implications of your business data on a phone, if you asked me to facilitate a videoconferencing session on your phone, you wouldn't see me for dust.

So, to sum up:

1. The ethos of an AGM/SGM is discussion between and amongst attendees, argument, counter argument and voting by ballot. This cannot be fulfilled by means of a distant, impersonal and prone to breakdown video link, therefore not feasible.
2. How many shareholders do have a laptop/smartphone/tablet? Thistle doesn't know hence too many shareholders could well be debarred from participating.

3. How many shareholders have a suitable broadband link? Thistle have no clue, so once again, not feasible as those without a reasonable internet connection would consequently be debarred from participating.
4. Are shareholders' devices capable of sustaining a link? Again, Thistle don't know hence not feasible.
5. Do shareholders have the required knowledge to setup and maintain a link, a system which in all probability, other than possibly a WhatsApp or Skype video, they have never attempted? On balance, probably very few, hence not feasible.
6. Do shareholders' mobile systems have sufficient data allowances, if required? Thistle don't know therefore, once more, not feasible.
7. Are shareholders' broadband connections, if available, correctly configured, including wireless? Thistle don't know, hence not feasible.
8. In the event of an overrun of a mobile data allowance, will Thistle compensate shareholders, bearing in mind charges can be massively punitive? Mmmm!
9. Will Thistle **guarantee** the security and safety of any Zoom connection? As they can barely work their own systems, that one would be in the negative.
10. Is the proposed use of Zoom based on a fully commercial and purchased server licence or is it the quick 'n (not so) easy crappy free version which has a time limit of forty minutes? Thistle has a long-standing habit of squandering residents' funds, so the former could be the case. Sight of the authorisation would be required. In the case of the latter, don't go there as in the **very** off chance every shareholder's circumstance met all of the above criteria, which won't be the case, and assuming every link was constant and not interrupted, forty minutes would be an insufficient time to conduct business at either an AGM or a SGM.

Quite simply , Thistle have made no preparation for any of the above, have made no allowances in their Rules (which are written to protect them rather than residents), have never considered any emergency or fallback procedures, so all of this video play stuff is not in their Rules nor is there any vague interpretation in their Rules and, as you well know, Thistle follows and interprets their own Rules as they see fit. In this case, there ain't any room and no permission or allowance of any kind to conduct business by any means other by the accepted practice of a GENERAL MEETING, as clearly stated in their Rules.

So many shareholders would be practically debarred from taking part in an AGM or SGM if such meetings were held over video link.

You might want to make the suggestion to Thistle that the Special General Meeting is held in abeyance until such time as the Covid situation takes a turn for the better, although I suspect that won't happen for some time given recent increases in outbreaks. No matter how this plays out, the SGM must take place prior to the AGM which will undoubtedly fall foul of the same health risks, problems and objections should Thistle even attempt an impracticable AGM via video.