



EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

People come together for a variety of reasons and will have a variety of different reactions to a request to meet. The success, or otherwise, of a meeting depends on the way it is organised and the willingness of all participants to listen to and value each other.

A committee can only carry out its role effectively if it maintains a strong decision making process. Good decision making is generally the result of a systematic process. The main stages of decision making are:

- Clarification – to gather the facts, be clear about the proposal. A decision may have to be deferred to allow further clarification to be sought.
- Debate – to get a cross section of views. This should allow all alternatives to be aired.
- Decision – to try for consensus but not to delay unnecessarily. If necessary the decision can be put to a vote.

This information sheet outlines the role of committee members in ensuring that meetings are effective and the tools available to help them.

1 - WHY HAVE A MEETING?

- To share information about what has happened or is about to happen
- To get views or proposals about what should happen
- To discuss what the group should do and how it should be done
- To carry out business which must legally be transacted
- To learn about a topic of interest to the group
- To be with friends, share an interest or support each other

2 - THE COMMITTEE

- The Committee is elected by the members to carry out the work of the organisation. The Committee carries out the decisions made at meetings.
- Do we need one?
- How many should be on our committee?
- What are their jobs?

3 - THE CHAIRPERSON

- makes people comfortable
- allows people to speak
- makes sure discussions are fair
- keeps a firm control of the meeting
- guides the group to make a decision

4 - THE SECRETARY

- keeps people informed
- supports discussions
- records key points

5 - THE TREASURER

- keeps control of the money
- keeps records of money received and money spent
- gives a report at each meeting

6 - THE GROUP MEMBER

- joins in
- discusses items
- gives views
- helps make decisions

7 - THE AGENDA

- is a list of “items” that people agree to talk about
- should be sent out in advance so people have a chance to prepare for the meeting
- usually finishes with “Any Other Business” (AOB)

8- THE MINUTES

- are a record of people who attended the meeting
- are a record of people who apologised for not attending
- are a record of decisions made and the major factors in reaching those decisions
- are a record of who will take action and when

9 – MEETING RIGHTS - In meetings, everyone has the right to:

- State their opinions and put forward suggestions
- Have these opinions and suggestions listened to and reacted to
- Understand what is being said
- Disagree with views put forward by others
- Make their contributions without being interrupted by others
- Have an equal right to vote on all decisions (unless agreed otherwise due to vested interests)
- Change their views
- Have minutes that are an accurate reflection of what is said in the meetings
- Know in advance the purpose of the meeting
- Know in advance roughly how long the meeting will last
- Not to be personally attacked or put down for their views
- Not to be subjected to offensive language
- Not to be excluded by the use of jargon
- Have their confidence respected

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