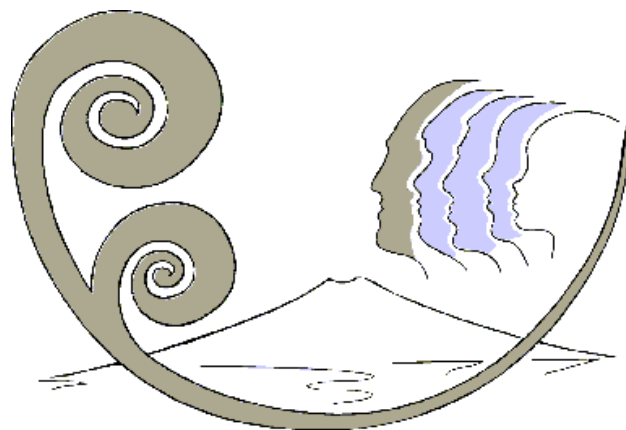


# **A GUIDE FOR COMMITTEES**



**Another Publication for the Not for Profit Sector**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge is power, and knowing how to take part in meetings and run them skilfully gives groups of people the power to make democratic decisions and act on them.

Many people feel out of place at meetings. They find them boring or frustrating. If you don't know the rules and understand the terms, meetings can be difficult. You may not know when to speak, or how to get your ideas put forward for discussion.

This booklet will help you understand meetings. It explains the procedures and terms used at formal meetings, and gives some suggestions for making both formal and informal meetings more productive and enjoyable.

The skill and confidence of the chairperson are important in a formal meeting, but everybody present can help make it a success. Luckily, all the skills needed to chair meetings and take part in them can be learned. As you become familiar with the procedures, confidence increases and with it the ability to play a more active role. In time you should be able to contribute more to decision making, and even take a leadership role, helping others develop their meeting skills.

Everyone in the organisation, irrespective of the role they play, should understand and be committed to the underlying vision, purpose and philosophy of the organisation. These aspects, which should be made explicit, provide the framework for action. They become the backdrop to planning and policy decisions and provide a standard against which achievements can be measured.

## **ROLE OF COMMITTEES**

The committee is elected by, and accountable to, members of the organisation. The role of the committee, on behalf of members, includes the formulation of specific policy, sometimes within the framework established by the national body, and the general policy set by members; the planning, monitoring and evaluation of organisation activities and performance; acting as a good employer of both paid staff and volunteer workers; fulfilling all legal obligations and ethical standards set by the organisation; and ensuring the necessary resources (people, money and equipment) are available to maintain quality programmes of maximum benefit to consumers.

The general powers of the committee should be outlined in the organisation's constitution. The Committee should have written terms of reference which specify authority, term, membership, function, procedures and accountability.

As part of its ongoing mandate, the committee should be responsible for submitting its annual plans and budget to the Annual General Meeting to seek general support for these plans. Subsequent reporting of achievements to the next Annual General Meeting would form part of its accountability obligations.

*Adapted from The Voluntary Organisation Setting - P Darracott*



## MEETINGS, MEETINGS AND MORE MEETINGS.....

More than 33% of time spent in meetings is unproductive.

Only 64% of meetings achieve their intended outcomes.

(From a survey of 1,000 American business leaders).

**Regardless of his or her role, every meeting participant is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the meeting's content and the effectiveness of the group process that is needed.**

### WHY HAVE MEETINGS?

Meetings are held for a number of reasons. Some of these are specific and practical, while others are less immediately obvious but also important, Meetings allow groups of people to:

- Share information
- Make collective decisions
- Allocate tasks
- Develop policies and make recommendations

Meetings can be valuable for the unity they build and the collective knowledge which develops. If your group has a common purpose, such as a union or environmental group, the purpose can lead to comradeship and solidarity, which will help you take successful action. If, like a school board of trustees or a co-operative business venture, your group has an administrative function, well run meetings are essential to help members understand issues and make clearly thought-out decisions.

The ideas of **task** and **process** are useful here. Every **group** has a reason for being together; sometimes it is as straight forward as its members enjoying themselves! Whatever it is, the **group's** reason for being together is called the **task**.

A successful group needs not only to work towards its long-term aims, but also to take care of the *feelings and relationships* between individual members. In other words, both the task and the process need attention.

We think of the task as the **head work**, and the process as the **heart work**. Both will suffer if they are split from one another. Experience shows that groups often neglect their process, especially if their task is complicated and demanding.

European culture tends to emphasise the importance of **head work**, at the expense of people's feelings. So an important part of **facilitation**, in any sort of group, is getting members to work on the process (as much as the group needs), as well as the task.

Balancing your group's task and process can be made easier with a checklist of points to consider. Some useful questions about the **task** of the group to sort out at the beginning (and review from time to time) are:

- How clear are we about the group goals?
- How often are we going to meet?
- How are we going to make decisions?
- Do we have the information we need?
- If not, do we know where to get it?
- How will we mobilise the energy and creativity of all members of the group to accomplish our task?
- How will we record our meetings and decisions about action?

Some useful questions to keep constantly in mind about the group **PROCESS** are:

- When personal feelings affect the way the group works together, are we prepared to recognise and deal openly with them?
- Are we prepared to express disagreements and conflict openly, so they can be used constructively?
- Do we have the skills we need to do these things and, if not, do we know where to find out about them?
- How much support and encouragement do we give to one another in the group?
- Are we open to experimenting with the leadership of the group and rotating it?



## STAGES IN GROUP GROWTH

Any new group goes through several recognisable stages in its life. If it is successful it will reach the final stages, but it can be blocked and held at an earlier one if some members have not dealt with the issues which belong there.

There are several ways of looking at these stages but below are most of the main points:

**POLITENESS AND UNCERTAINTY** - Group members are anxious to be accepted, and to avoid anything that's too revealing or uncomfortable. In the task area, the main concern is defining "*What Are We Here For?*"

**POWER AND CONFLICT** - An uncomfortable stage where everyone tries to establish their level of influence in the group. Members often attempt this by making suggestions and trying out ideas, which may be criticised or ignored by others. Here, the **facilitator** may need to show more firmness than would be appropriate at a later stage. Clear agendas and task-direction may be important.

**GROUP EFFECTIVENESS** - Now the group can begin to relax and share ideas. Members will think more about the group and less about themselves, start to solve problems and do creative work.

**COMMITMENT AND AWARENESS** - With some achievements to look back on, morale is high. There's a lot of trust and interdependence, members can challenge one another safely without arousing defensiveness, and can look for new ideas and improvements.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF MEETINGS

Five suggestions for making meetings more efficient, and maybe even shorter.

### 1. Orient participants before the meeting.

New Committee members should be briefed on their roles and responsibilities, policy issues, and relevant projects before the meeting.

### 2. Come prepared

Get the agenda and concise written reports and background information out far enough ahead so people have time to read them. Everyone should then come prepared for discussion and decision making.

### 3. Have an agenda and stick to it.

Time the agenda to limit extraneous discussion. Separate action items for decision making. Discuss the most difficult items first. New items should be dealt with in general business.

#### **4. Allow full and fair discussion of a topic, but stay focused.**

Avoid oral reports if the same information is in the written report, or simply repeating points already made. Don't let individuals dominate the discussion.

#### **5. Start and finish on time.**

### **RESULTS OFTEN DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED:**

- To solve a problem, fewer than five people is a good number.
- To identify a problem, keep to ten or less.
- When you need to review information 20 should be the maximum.
- For motivational or inspirational purposes, the more the merrier, provided the meeting is soundly controlled.
- If you have a large group, make your meeting short and snappy. A few people can work round the clock to solve a problem but large numbers get restless because they can't be involved to the same degree.

“Getting your Ideas Across” Geoffrey Moss

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON - PRESIDENT**

**The Chairperson should be a leader but not dominate. They should listen aggressively and ensure they act as a facilitator rather than dominate the meeting with their own views.**

In formal meetings the chairperson is the key participant, setting the tone of the meeting and having a major effect on the outcome. Because this role is so vital, certain qualities are needed. Good humour, patience and tolerance are important. A chairperson must also know how to be both firm and fair, provide leadership, and guarantee that the meeting runs democratically.

A knowledge of the organisation is important, so that its rules, objectives and past decisions can be taken into account.

It is also vital that a chairperson be impartial and able to listen to all points of view. All those who wish to speak should be encouraged to do so, but a chairperson may have to rule on the order of speakers.

It is important to create an atmosphere in which all relevant views can be expressed. If everyone is encouraged to participate there is less chance of misunderstandings later when decisions are put into practice.

Irrelevant contributions waste time and confuse issues and must be politely discouraged.

A good chairperson will be able to 'feel' when a meeting is ready to make a decision. At this point the chairperson should briefly review the discussion, present the options to the meeting, and make sure everyone is clear about issues before a decision is made.

## **THE CHAIRPERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

Before the meeting starts, the chairperson must be thoroughly prepared. If you are going to chair a meeting, these are the things you are responsible for:

### **Before the meeting**

- Make sure you are clear about the purpose of the meeting; what do you hope to achieve?
- Make sure you have allowed enough time for all the topics to be dealt with.
- Allocate time so that important items get fullest discussion.
- Check that all those entitled to attend have a chance to do so.
- Do some groundwork on subjects you expect to be reconsidered.
- Think about what the conflicting points of view might be and how you might handle them.
- Check that the practical preparations have been carried out.
- Brush up on your meeting procedures; take copies of this book and your constitution and/or standing orders to the meeting.

### **During the meeting**

- Make sure the meeting has been properly called and that there is a 'quorum'
- Start on time; keep to time
- Outline the purpose(s)
- Encourage participation
- Control discussion
- safeguard the rights of members by ensuring proper observance of the rules
- Help the meeting to make decisions
- Make sure arrangements are made to translate decision into action
- Maintain a spirit of democracy and solidarity.

## **PREPARATIONS**

- If a permanent record is needed, have a book for it.
- For recording during a meeting, and to aid discussion, you need something like a whiteboard, or large sheets of newsprint fastened up with masking tape and written on in thick felt pen, so that everyone can see.

## **SETTING THE SCENE**

- The room should be made as comfortable and welcoming as possible, seating as near to a circle as possible, no "**top table**" where power concentrates, everyone able to see the board/newsprint.

- Everyone individually welcomed as they arrive.

## **IMMEDIATE ISSUES**

- Who will be the recorder? (The recorder should note in the book no more than: date, place and time of meeting, those present, the agenda, decisions made, who will carry out the decisions, and a space for noting at the next meeting what action was taken).
- Do members want to fix a time for ending? If so, agree on the time and appoint a timekeeper to remind the group at half-time and at 15 minutes before the end.

Identify the ground rules, discussion procedures and methods of decision-making if necessary.

## **CLOSURE AND FAREWELLS**

However you do these, they're important.

### **POINTS TO NOTE:**

- Don't interpret silence as agreement - check it out.
- Both process and content are equally important and must be managed carefully. The ideal meeting is one that balances process with content.
- Without an agreed upon process to guide discussion and group interaction, the meeting has no road map.
- Without high quality input, or content, it does not pay to make the journey.
- Have fun!! Encourage enjoyment, laughter, encouragement.
- The most articulate speaker does not always have all the answers.

It is important not to make heavy weather of meeting framework; deal with it as quickly and as lightly as you can. Always, the greatest difficulty is to prevent people speaking longer than necessary, so the facilitator needs to provide a good model.

## **ANNUAL MEETINGS**

These stand apart from regular meetings and their purpose is usually for:

### **Election of officers**

The meetings is run by those who held office during he year.

Newly elected officers take up their positions after the annual meeting. The chairperson should ensure the election procedures of the organisation are followed and

the business of a annual meeting is as laid out in the agenda. It is the same as an ordinary meeting. The minutes read are those of the pervious annual meeting.

### **Presentation of the annual report and annual accounts.**

Reports and financial statements must be prepared and presented in a form required by rules of the organisation.

### **Amendment to rules**

All legal requirements must be met.

When the agenda is completed, the chairperson should close the annual meeting.

If the meeting wants to deal with other business, the new chairperson should take over, declare the meeting in session as an ordinary meeting, and proceed by the rules.

### **CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER AND DECLARE IT OPEN**

1. Start the meeting on time and get everyone's attention before proceeding with the business. Stand and rap on the table, or use a gavel, if you need to call attention and establish your authority.
2. Make sure all the people present are entitled to be there.
- 3 Check that there is a quorum (the minimum number of members required by your constitution or standing orders).
4. Present the agenda for approval, and ask if members wish to raise other matters or change the order of business. Assign time limits to agenda items relative to their importance.

### **APOLOGIES AND ROLL CALL**

1. The chairperson asks the secretary to read out apologies from those from the meeting.
2. List those present. This may not be practical in a large meeting, however a record of officers and committee members attending smaller meetings should be kept. Pass around pen and paper for this purpose.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND DECLARE IT OPEN .. APOLOGIES AND ROLL CALL</b></p>
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### **READ AND APPROVE MINUTES**

1. The secretary usually reads aloud the minutes of the previous meeting. If the minutes have been circulated, the chairperson can ask for a motion 'that the minutes be taken as read.' If this is agreed to, the minutes are not read out.
2. As minutes are the official record of the meeting it is important they are accurate and complete.

Minutes must include:

- The place, date and opening and closing times of the meeting
- The chairperson's name
- Attendance numbers, and in small meetings names also
- Apologies
- The exact wording of motions, amendments and resolutions
- Detail of accounts dealt with

When they have been read the chairperson asks "Are there any additions, deletions or other corrections to the minutes?" If alterations are required, the chairperson must ask the meeting's approval. A majority vote is needed to make alterations, which should be initialled by the chairperson. The chairperson sign the minutes and dates the signature.

### **MATTERS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES**

1. These are matters referred to in the minutes which need further action or feedback.
2. Unless they appear elsewhere on the agenda, in correspondence or reports for example, they should be discussed at this point.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>READ AND APPROVE MINUTES .. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES</b></p>
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### **CORRESPONDENCE**

1. Correspondence consists of letters or other communications received since the previous meeting and not already dealt with.
2. The secretary is responsible for presenting the correspondence to the meeting, but does not need to read it all out word for word.
3. A list of correspondence received and sent can be circulated, and the meeting can then ask for specific ones to be read aloud.
4. Matters arising from the correspondence can either be dealt with as they arise, or after all the correspondence has been presented.
5. After it has been fully dealt with, correspondence must be moved and seconded. The motion should state "That the inward correspondence be received and the outward correspondence be confirmed."

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

1. The treasurer reads or circulates a financial statement including a list of any accounts for payment.
2. Following discussion, the statement should be 'received' and the accounts passed for payment
3. Annual accounts should be audited and 'adopted.'

### **OTHER REPORTS**

1. Other reports should be asked for as required. They are most useful when provided in writing and they include recommendations.
2. Reports can be either 'received' or 'adopted.'
3. If 'received,' the meeting is not committed to its recommendations. The report need not be acted upon, and can be further considered.
4. If 'adopted,' the meeting is committed to the report's recommendations, and action will follow.

<b>CORRESPONDENCE .. FINANCIAL AND OTHERS REPORTS</b>
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### **NEW BUSINESS AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. New business consists of items brought up for the first time at a meeting.
2. Any other business: members may raise minor matters not previously discussed. If a matter raised here turns out to be important, there are three ways to deal with it:
  - a. Place it on the agenda for the next general meeting
  - b. Call a special meeting to deal with it
  - c. Authorise the executive or some appropriate to deal with it.

### **CLOSING THE MEETING**

1. When all business is finished, the chairperson should:
  - Thanks members for attending
  - Tell them when and where the next meeting will be (time, date, venue)
2. If the business is unfinished when the meeting is due to close, the meeting should be adjourned. The chairperson asks someone to move "that this meeting be adjourned" and sets a suitable time and place for a meeting to complete the business. A good chairperson will try to make sure all business is finished in time. Giving each agenda item a time limit in advance will help this to happen.

<b>NEW AND ANY OTHERS BUSINESS .. CLOSING THE MEETING</b>
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## THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY



**A good secretary is invaluable and ensures that all the paperwork is attended to and the meeting preparation is adequate.**

### **RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

#### **General duties:**

Clearing post office box at least weekly. Any secretary unable to achieve his at

any time should delegate their authority to enable someone else to clear the mail.

Recording all incoming and outgoing correspondence - this is a very useful document.

Record this in an exercise book or folder.

Ensuring all correspondence is actioned promptly. Some matters can be dealt with before the next meeting.

Keeping comprehensive records of all business.

Maintaining membership list.

Preparing newsletters.

Attending to all phone queries.

Preparing funding applications in consultation with the Committee and possibly staff.

Attending Branch and Committee meetings.

#### **Meetings:**

Pre arrange meeting agenda in consultation with the President/Chairperson

Circulate Minutes of previous meeting and agenda of forthcoming meeting, if possible, or have them available at the next meeting.

Taking the Minutes of committee meetings, typing or writing these legibly immediately following the meeting, clearing them with the Chairperson and preferably circulating them to committee members in time for them to be read before the next meeting.

Maintaining a Minute book.

Actioning correspondence arising from the meeting.

Actioning telephone contacts requested by the meeting.

The Secretary's job is often the most demanding. Not only do they have to do all the preparation for the meeting, they need to steer the Chairperson through the meeting as well as record accurately the discussion that takes place at the meeting. After the meeting there is still much to be done.

- For formal meetings write up the minutes and check them over with the Chairperson.
- For informal meetings, make sure that a proper record of decisions is kept so that it can be referred to later if necessary.

- Send out the minutes to all members
- Following up decisions made at the meeting. Telephone calls may have to be made or letters written to remind members what they are required to do.
- If the meeting asked to see particular letters or documents, ensuring that these are circulated to members.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF MINUTES**

Minutes are expected to provide an accurate summary of what went on at a meeting, to transmit information to people unable to attend it, inform members of the next meeting and provide a record of decisions taken, and how those decisions were reached. These functions can be summarised as constitutional, executive and continuous.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL**

The minutes, when signed, provide an authentic record of the proceedings. This is the constitutional function of the minutes.

### **EXECUTIVE**

When something has been decided, that decision will have to be carried out, and probably within a given timespan. The minute taker must note down the name of the person to whom the task is assigned, who gave the assignment, and what date if any is envisaged for its completion, or perhaps a progress report. The minutes therefore constitute a record of any action to be taken and the authority for doing it. This is the executive function of the minutes.

### **CONTINUOUS**

Policy is discussed and progresses through a meeting or a succession of meetings. The minute should therefore enable the final points of a policy discussion at the last meeting to be continued at the next, without any interruption save the time lag between the respective meetings.

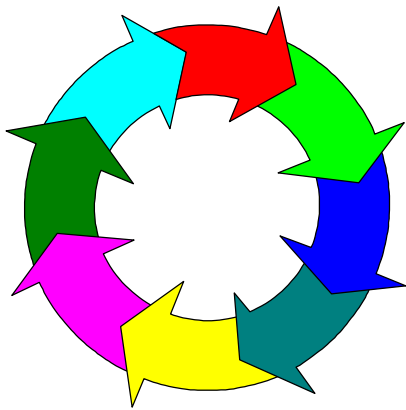
### **CONTENTS OF THE MINUTES**

What should go into the minutes is partly governed by the rules of the organisation and the order of business to be dealt with at the meeting ie the agenda.

When writing minutes, do not attribute statements to particular people rather “...the following points were made”

Minutes are not a record of what took place, but of how agreement was reached or disagreement arose; usually agreement is founded on the sense that was talked.

Minutes are strictly functional but must be accurate, brief and clear. They also need to be objective, showing no political or other bias. Their aim is to give an accurate, factual, succinct report of a meeting which took place, and which you are recording for interested readers. In whatever form the minutes are ultimately produced, they should be concise, correct, legible and intelligible.



## PLANNING IS VITAL

There are two main problems areas faced by those organising meetings.

**Attendance** is often the biggest problem faced by those organising a meeting.

People are frequently reluctant to go to meetings. They may have had a bad experience in the past, feel that they cannot spare the time, or not understand why they should be involved. If the meeting is called at short notice they may have other

engagements or be unable to arrange childcare.

When you are planning to hold a meeting, make sure that those who are entitled to attend can do so as easily as possible:

- Choose a time which is convenient to those involved. Check this out with representatives of different groups (eg. women, shift workers) if you are not sure.
- Think about the venue. It should be accessible and appropriate.
- Let people know well in advance. Tell them what the meeting is about and why they should come. Include all relevant information such as time, date, place, names of guest speakers and other groups who will be there.
- Advertise any facilities you will provide such as childcare, refreshments etc, and if necessary include directions.
- Remind people the day before the meeting.

Once people are there, a democratic, useful and enjoyable meeting will encourage them to come again in the future.

Preparation includes creating a suitable environment and making sure meeting procedures run smoothly. If people are comfortable and not bothered by hunger, thirst or outside noise and distraction they will be able to participate more fully.

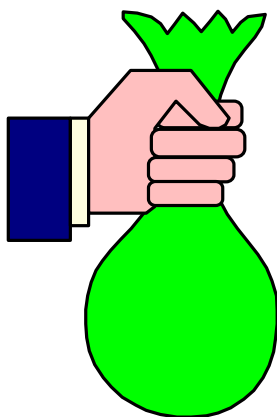
When you arrange a venue check that heating, lighting and furniture are all suitable. Decide in advance whether you will allow smoking and make this very clear to people at the start. Organise services such as childcare facilities. If you are not familiar with the venue, check that there will be no disturbance from high noise levels or unwanted interruptions.

Make sure that speakers are fully briefed and any materials such as information sheets, reports etc. are ready. While the chairperson takes responsibility for a formal meetings, things will run better if those attending understand and participate in the procedures.

If tension consistently exists in groups you will find committee members reluctant to attend and it almost impossible to recruit new committee members. Even if you are

not intending to take an office bearing position in the near future, the information on the following pages will help you to play a more effective part.

## **THE ROLE OF THE TREASURER**



### **RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

Ensuring all monies received are receipted and banked.  
Ensuring all accounts are paid by due date  
Keeping annual cash book or computerised accounts showing adequate record of financial transactions to enable a clear up to date position of Branch financial statements.  
Ensuring that the Financial Statements are ready for auditing at the end of the financial year  
Presenting a financial statement at monthly committee meetings

Payment of salaries to employed staff.

Keeping a wage book to note annual leave, sick leave, unspecified leave and time in lieu.

Preparing budgets.

Managing branch finances and investments

Registering for GST if appropriate.

Preparing GST returns.

Adhering to designated end of the financial year as set out in the constitution

Preparing PAYE monthly and annual returns

Preparing ACC annual returns

Acting as spokesperson for the Branch on financial matters

Ensuring Branch equipment is insured

Being familiar with employment contracts for staff

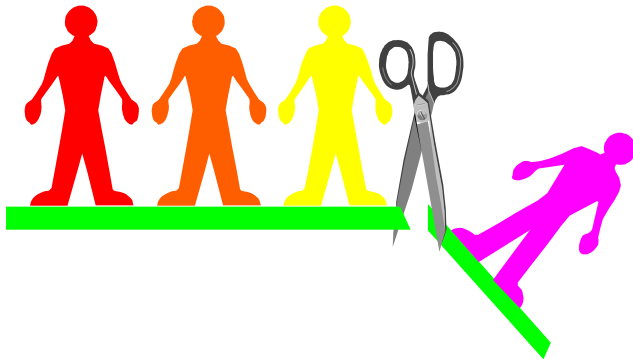
Being aware of staff subsidies available.

Preparing funding applications in consultation with committee.

The role of the treasurer is to get the money in, deal with it as the organisation requires, and account for the funds at the end. It is the treasurer's job to ensure that subscriptions are paid and receipts recorded. The treasurer is the trustee of the funds received and accordingly must keep them somewhere where they will not be lost, stolen or diminished. A proper and complete set of financial accounts must be kept and it is always wise to obtain professional advice as to the type of records you must keep.

It is important that the treasurer prepares accurate and understandable reports for meetings and does not confuse people with pages and pages of figures which are hard to understand. Members on the committee should fully understand the accounts of the organisation and it is the treasurer's job to produce reports which reflect the position of the organisation and ensure that the committee understands them.

For some smaller organisations the position of secretary and treasurer are combined to become secretary/treasurer.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Responsible for:

- Attending all committee meetings
- Actively supporting the organisation and its office bearers
- Participate on sub-committees

- Lead discussions where appropriate
- Present alternative views
- Take an active and informed part in decision making
- Liaise with outside organisations when delegated
- Actively participate in Branch projects and take a lead where possible.
- Be fully informed on national issues
- Prepare and submit remits to the annual general meeting

Meetings need active members they do not need people who dominate, talk excessively, know everything, remain silent and don't contribute or masters in conspiracy theories.

### A checklist of an effective member:

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Remember what the organisation is all about</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Come prepared to the meeting</b>                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Speak clearly and to the point</b>              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Be a good listener</b>                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Be tactful and polite</b>                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Be patient</b>                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Be unafraid</b>                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Be supportive to the Chair</b>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Do not misuse the meeting</b>                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# TYPES OF MEETINGS

## INFORMAL MEETINGS

Any group of people can hold a meeting. There is often no need to have formal rules, but it is generally agreed that some structure it helps to make best use of the time and encourages all members to participate.

Advantage of informal meetings include a more relaxed atmosphere, more group participation in the process, and scope for discussion to evolve and take a wider range of possibilities into account.

The section **Planning is Vital** is also relevant to informal meetings. A facilitator, an agenda and some form of record or minutes taking ensure that the meeting is run in a fair and ordered manner and that the outcome is not disputed later.

The facilitator, like a chairperson, keeps the meeting focussed in the task at hand, ensuring that the agenda is followed, decisions are reached when necessary, and ground rules are followed.

The position of facilitator may be fixed in advance, though often members take turns or volunteer for the task.

Once the facilitator is chosen, the meeting should set ground rules. These may include confidentiality, time frame, agreements on acceptable behaviour, and own decision will be reached. Someone, not the facilitator, should be assigned to keep a record of the main discussion points and all decisions.

Consensus decision-making is often used . Consensus is reached when all members feel able to accept a decision. A consensus decision is not necessarily unanimous - a few members may accept a decision they do not personally agree with.

If possible, it helps open and honest participation if all members of the group can see each others, and no-one is placed on a higher level than anyone else. Seating arranged in a circle with no furniture between is ideal.

An agenda should be developed at the start of the meeting.

Members may want to greet each other and spend a short while in informal conversation first, but it is important that the meeting does not get carried away with an issue until priorities are agreed on.

A sheet of paper or a blackboard often used for listing agenda items as they are suggested by those present, or transferred from a previous meeting's unfinished business.

The facilitator should consult with the meeting to give agenda items priority and to assign a time limit for each subject.

**Claim time** is a period in the meeting set aside for dealing with short personal issues, giving information or asking questions. The facilitator asks what claim tie people want and this is noted along with their name. Two to five minutes is appropriate for this. If a person wants much longer, say over 10 minutes, the issue should appear on the agenda and have a priority assigned to it. Claims time should be scheduled early on in the meeting. It allows individual concerns of the members to be cleared quickly and frees their minds for other business.

When the agenda is decided, the items should be opened for discussion in the agreed order. The facilitator may remind the meeting of the time limit of each item, and should ask the person who raised the issue to open the discussion. There are several ways to help if it starts to flounder:

**Brainstorming** helps to put forward a lot of possibilities quickly and efficiently. Ask members to call out all their ideas and write on a large sheet of paper or blackboard. When this is complete, the facilitator summaries the main ideas or any patterns which appear, and these can be looked at more closely. This focuses discussion and can draw together a meeting which seems to have too many solutions to handle.

**Rounds** are when each person in turn states their own thoughts or feelings on an issue. This brings everyone into the meeting, encourages quiet ones to speak and makes dominant members listen. Each person must be allowed to speak without interruption. Rounds helps clarify the feeling of a meeting, and can be used in consensus decision - making to check whether agreement has actually been reached.

**Small group work** helps shy members to participate, encourages creative thinking and builds a smaller working unit with two to six members to tackle specific tasks or discuss a general issue and then feed ideas back into the re-assembled meeting.

**Hidden Agendas** are the underling values, belief and attitudes people bring to meetings. If no agreements can be reached despite full discussion, the facilitator may need to bring open underlying value clashes or unresolved conflicts. Winning is a common 'hidden agenda' which sabotages attempts at co-operation. The facilitator may need to point this out.

If two or more members are dominating by ongoing unreasonable conflict, the facilitator may ask them to sit close together. This makes it more difficult for them to continue sparring.

**AT THE END OF THE MEETING,** acknowledge any unfinished business and hold it over until the next meeting. Summarise the main issues and the decisions for action to be taken. It can be useful to evaluate the meeting, possibly with a round of positive and negative feelings, or by members indicating on a scale of one to ten how useful they consider it has been.

## 2. MAORI HUI OR MEETINGS

If a meeting is to be held on a marae, those taking part should familiarise themselves in advance with the generally accepted 'kaupapa o te marae' kawa, or protocol. The information given here is a brief outline and only a guide. It must be stressed however, procedure on any marae is governed by local marae **or tribal kaupapa**. The Maori way of holding meetings allows all points of view to be thoroughly considered.

### ON THE MARAE MEETINGS

- Powhiri and Mihi from tangata whenua
- Mihi whakahoi - reply to welcome
- Karakia
- The Paepae will introduce **te take**, the reason for gathering and te kaupapa, or format to be followed. The hui will proceed on the kaupapa of the gathering. Procedure of meetings is similar to general meetings, the only difference is that sometimes they do not have a Chairperson and people have a right to be heard without interruption.
- When speaking it is usual to stand.
- On marae, people speak to people, not to others about them.
- If possible those taking part in a hui should contribute to the whai korero or discussion in Maori.

**They certainly should use a Maori greeting such as:**

1. Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena koutou katoa  
(greeting, greetings, greetings, to you all)
2. Kia ora koutou katoa  
( or simply, greetings to you all)
3. Kia ora

Almost without exception, meetings run according to Maori protocol and will open and close with a prayer. This is the case even when marae protocol is not being followed.

### ADVICE FOR GENERAL MEETINGS

1. At meetings with Maori people in attendance it is appropriate to greet them with a Maori greeting.
2. Maori people who attend may be asked if they want to say a **Mihi** (greeting) or a Karakia before proceeding with the meeting. Not all marae meetings have a powhiri first:

The procedure is usually:

1. Mihi
2. Karakia
3. Meeting proceeds

#### 4. Karakia

### 3. PACIFIC ISLAND WAY

Pacific Island people have their own traditional way of conducting meetings. Everyone is entitled to speak without interruption. Any argument can be raised or advice offered, but in the end, what you are looking for is a consensus of opinion. This process always provides a satisfactory decision.

More broadly based community meetings which involve Pacific Island people are usually conducted according to the rules of formal meetings, and all those involved have a right to speak.

At the beginning, all ethnic groups would be welcomed in their own language. These greetings are listed below.

Talofa Lava - Samoan  
Taloha Ni - Tokelauan  
Fakalofa Lahi, Atu - Nuiean  
Nisa Bula Vinaka - Fijian  
Kia Orana \_ Cook Island  
Malo e Lelei - Tongan  
Kia Ora - Maori

Pacific Island people often begin and end a meeting with a prayer. Their traditions also allow more time for discussion, and while this is now limited by the pressures of life in the modern world, a less hurried approach is still likely to be taken, especially by older people.

When the meeting has come to a close, food will often be served. This gives participants a chance to meet each other in a more relaxed fashion, and the informal discussion which takes place then may develop into an issue to be raised at a future meeting.

**Adapted from Effective Meeting A Chairperson's Guide**

# FORMAL MEETING PROCEDURE



## RULES OF DEBATE AND PROCEDURE

While formal meetings are usually considered in a similar way, most organisations have their own 'standing orders'. These set out the way the group applies the general rules outlined here. Before setting out to chair a meeting you should be familiar with relevant standing orders as well as the procedures.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

There must be an agenda and a quorum.

An agenda is a list of the matters which will be discussed.

### Typically it includes:

- Apologies
- Minutes of last meeting
- Business arising from those minutes
- Correspondence
- Financial and other reports, and
- General business.

The agenda is normally prepared in advance, often by the secretary. At the beginning of the meeting the chairperson often presents the agenda to the meeting for approval and to give members a chance to make additions or alterations.

A quorum is the number of people who need to be present before the meeting can make valid decisions. The standing orders of your organisation will set out how many people are needed to form a quorum.

## MOTIONS

A motion is a formal proposal for consideration by a meeting.

It should be short and to the point.

Motions begin with the word 'that' and propose some change or action. The issue concerned should be stated and the change of action outlined, along with who is proposing it. For example a motion might be "I move that the staffroom be painted next week and nominate the maintenance committee to purchase the paint and employ someone to do the job. The maintenance committee to oversee the work and report back to the next meeting."

If one other person at the meeting considers the proposal is worth considering they will 'second' it. The matters outline in the motion and nothing else are then the subject of discussion.

This system allows the meeting to concentrate on one subject at a time, to draw out the knowledge and options of the people present, and makes speedy decision-making possible.

## **MOVE IT**

When someone proposes a 'motion' to the meeting they are said to begin 'moving it'. A person who wishes to put forward a proposal in this way must first get the chairperson's attention.

In a small group it may be possible to do this, for example, by body language, raising a hand, or eye contact. But in many situations, including larger meetings, it is most effective to stand and say 'Ms/Mr Chair.' Once the chairperson's attention is gained, the speaker waits for a signal, or 'call to speak.' If several people want to speak at once the chairperson decides the order they will speak in.

When signalled, or 'called' to speak, the person proposing the motion says "I move that . . . . . (the proposal)." Generally the mover can then explain briefly why they are making this specific proposal.

Discussion of a motion is called 'speaking to' it. The chairperson may judge whether it is necessary for a mover to speak to their motion.

## **IN OR OUT OF ORDER**

Sometimes a motion is challenged. When a member of the meeting argues that a proposal is 'out of order,' the chairperson must decide if the motion is acceptable or not.

Generally speaking, if the motion is on a subject which is within the scope of the meeting, and does not conflict with the rules of the organisation, it is in order and should be accepted by the chairperson.

## **SECONDEES**

Before it can be discussed by the meeting, a motion must be 'seconded.' When a motion has been moved, another person may say 'I second that.' That means they agree with the motion and wish to see it considered. If no-one speaks up, the chairperson will ask if there is a seconder for the motion. A motion must be seconded before it can be discussed.

## **DISCUSSION**

The person who moves the motion is usually able to 'speak to it' first, and has the last say, or right of reply, before the motion is put to the vote.

In between these two presentations, the chairperson calls on members to put their views to the meeting. The seconder may speak first, or later in the discussion.

In formal meetings it is usual to allow one speech per person on any one motion.

If several speakers in a row argue the same side of a case, it is good practice for the chairperson to call for speakers who disagree. This can balance the debate, or if it is obvious that the meeting is in agreement on the issue, it can be settled quickly as further discussion would not alter the vote.

## **NOTICE OF MOTION**

When a matter needs time for consideration before it is discussed, the person proposing it may submit a 'notice of motion' asking for the proposal to be included on a future agenda. Standing orders may lay down which matters require notices of motion, or the chairperson may make a ruling after listening to the views of the meeting. Notices of motion should be given in writing, clearly showing the wording of the motion, and should have a special place on the agenda.

## **AMENDMENTS**

Sometimes the meeting will not accept a motion exactly as it was originally put forward, but will agree to a slightly altered one.

- An amendment is a proposal to change, add or take away some of the words of the original motion, it cannot radically alter the meaning or intention of the motion, and amendments which do that should be ruled 'out of order' by the chairperson. After an amendment has been proposed it may be discussed by the meeting.
- Then a vote should be taken.
- If the majority agrees with the amendment the chairperson says, 'I declare the amendment carried, The amendment now becomes the substantive motion.'
- This amended version then become the proposal under discussion.
- More than one amendment should not be discussed at once.
- If other amendments are proposed, the chairperson should take note and return to them when the first one has been voted on.

## **VOTING Who may vote?**

Generally each member present is entitled to one vote on each issue. Sometimes organisation have rules which allow a person more than one vote. Union affiliates may hold votes according to the total membership they represent. This is known as a 'card vote.' If rules allow it, absent members can ask someone to vote for them. This is a 'proxy vote.' Shareholders may have voting power according to the number of shares they own in a company.

## **PROCEDURES**



Before a vote is taken the chairperson should read out the motion or amendment concerned, to make sure those present understanding exactly what they are voting on. Voting can be:

- by voice ('those in favour say aye, those against say no')
- by a show of hands
- by ballot

Vote by voice is often sufficient, but if the outcome is not clear, the chairperson may ask for a show of hands, first for, then against, and have them counted.

Secret ballot can be requested by a majority of those eligible to vote, or the chairperson may rule that such a ballot be held. Most standing orders lay down procedures to be followed in conducting a secret ballot. These usually involve the election or appointment of a returning officer to run the ballot, and may require that scrutineers are appointed to check the result.

Which ever method of voting is used the chairperson must always declare the result 'carried' or 'lost.' People who abstain from voting or who vote against the majority can ask to have their action recorded in the minutes.

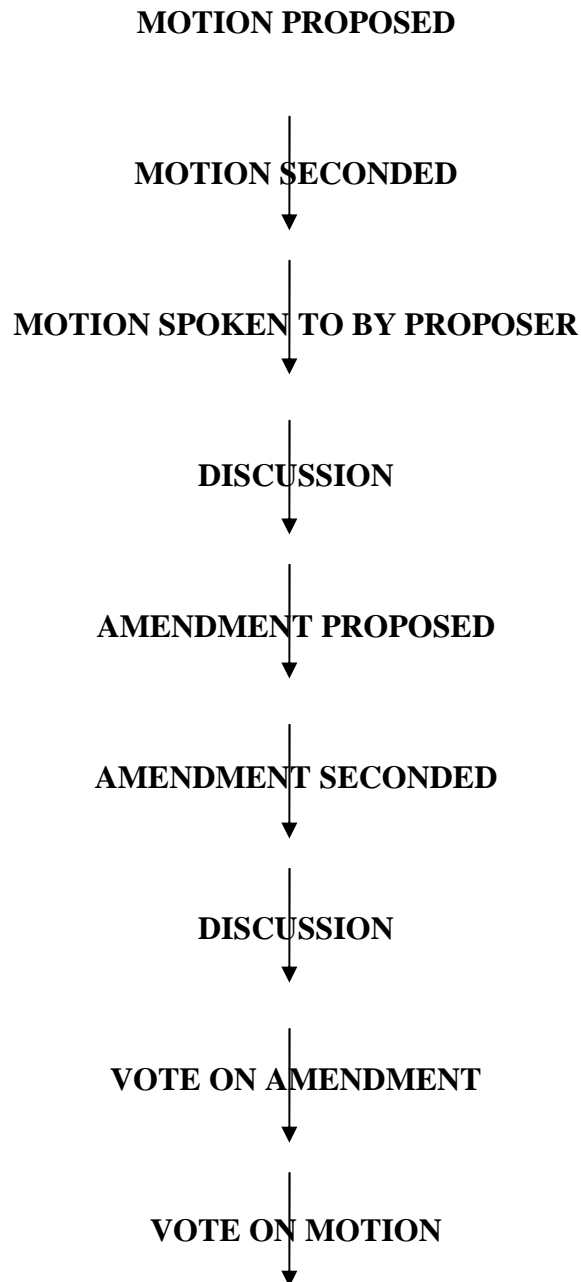
While the chairperson may vote, this is not recommended. The meeting is more likely to have confidence in a chairperson who does not take one side or the other. A casting vote may be allowed for by standing orders. This gives the chairperson an extra vote, but it need not be used, and should only be considered when numbers for and against are even (a tied vote).

## **POINTS OF ORDER**

If a member thinks the rules or standing orders are not being followed correctly, they may say "point of order Mr/Ms Chair."

- The chairperson must deal with points of order immediately.
- The speaker who has been interrupted is asked to sit down and the member who raised the point of order asked "What is the point of order."
- The person should explain briefly and the chairperson then must say whether there is a valid case or not, and rule accordingly. The chairperson's ruling should only be challenged in extreme circumstances.

Possible points of order may arise if there is no quorum, or if someone is speaking for a second time.



**If more than one amendment is proposed each should be dealt with in order.**

**After the vote the Chairperson should announce whether the motion or amendment has been carried or lost.**

### **POINTS OF EXPLANATION**

Sometimes something comes up in discussion which needs explanation, but standing orders do not allow this, perhaps because the person involved has already spoken to the motion. In this case, they may raise a point of explanation.

To do this they wait until the speech is finished then signal to the chairperson “Ms/Mr Chair - a point of explanation.” The chairperson decides whether to allow

it. A point of explanation must be just that, and not an excuse to speak again in the debate.

## **SPECIAL MOTIONS**

These all effectively limit discussion, and for this reason must be treated with care. The chairperson should make sure everybody present understands what is going on when special motions are used.

**The Closure motion:** “I move the motion be now put.”

- This can be moved by someone who considers the motion before the meeting has been discussed enough, and who has not taken part in the debate.
- If the chairperson judges the closure motion is reasonable, they can accept it.
- At this point the motion being discussed is frequently put to the vote. This is not strictly correct, as the closure motion should be put to vote after the chairperson accepts it. After that has been passed, the motion under discussion can be voted on.

**Motion to proceed:** “I move that we proceed to the next business” or “I move that this discussion be adjourned until next meeting,”

These motions are used when people at a meeting do not want to discuss a matter further or to vote on it. They can be moved by someone who has not taken part in the debate and if the motion is accepted and passed the chairperson moves on to the next item on the agenda.

**Motion to adjourn:** “I move that the meeting adjourn. . . .”

Motion to adjourn the whole meeting should include time and place for re-start of the meeting.

**Motion to suspend standing orders:** “I move that standing orders be suspended to allow.....” There must be a very good reason to suspend standing orders. Occasionally some matter may need to be considered which is not allowed by standing orders. This motion is used most often to allow a special guest to speak in the middle of business when this is the only time they can do so.

## **CHALLENGING THE CHAIRPERSON**

Respect for the authority of the chair is basic to orderly procedure. The rulings of the chairperson should only be challenged if they are grossly wrong and unfair. In order to maintain respect for the leadership of the chairperson and ensure democracy is maintained, the following procedure has been developed.

If a member thinks a chairperson has made a wrong ruling they stand and say “I challenge your ruling.”

Then the chairperson leaves the chair and the vice-chairperson, or some one chosen by the meeting, takes over. This person asks the challenger to give the reason for their challenge, and the chairperson to explain their ruling.

Without discussion, the motion “that the chairperson’s ruling be upheld” is then put to the meeting. If it is passed the chairperson resumes the chair and proceeds from the point of their ruling. If the motion is lost the chairperson resumes the chair and proceeds from the post before their ruling.

## **MEETINGS IN COMMITTEE**

For the purpose of discussing matters which are private and for which publicity is not desired, a meeting can go into committee. Someone should move “that the meeting go into committee for the purpose of discussing.....” If the motion is accepted, seconded and passed the chairperson says “I declare this meeting be in committee.” The whole, or any portion, of a meeting can be held in committee. Once the ‘in committee’ deliberations are complete, the chairperson declare the meeting resumed. Discussion made “in committee” must be reported back to the meeting in the form of recommendations. These can then be either accepted or rejected.

Adapted from Effective Meetings a Chairperson’s Guide

## **APPRAISING THE PERFORMANCE OF COMMITTEES**

Just as employees need to formally evaluate their work performance and receive feedback and recognition on their achievements and on possible areas for improvement, so do committee members.

An annual performance appraisal provides the opportunity for the committee to consider its own strengths and weaknesses in relation to its key tasks and specific objectives, define training needs and to set new objectives.

### **WHO DOES THE APPRAISAL?**

The responsibility for assuring that the appraisal happens rests with the Chairperson who may choose to facilitate the appraisal themselves or may wish to involve the branch manager or other committee members as the whole appraisal is seen as a team effort.

The committee may wish to involve some key staff or members of an advisory group if you have one.

### **THE APPRAISAL PROCESS**

A set date is chosen for the annual appraisal.

All committee members and those who have been invited to participate in the appraisal are asked to prepare for the appraisal meeting in their own time reflecting on the key tasks of the committee and on any objectives that the committee had set for the year.

At the appraisal meeting committee members would discuss:

- effective actions that have taken place of the past 12 months
- any concerns
- any changes required.

**REMEMBER THE APPRAISAL IS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE  
COMMITTEE NOT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF INDIVIDUAL  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Some organisations have a Code of Conduct for their committees to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and conduct expected of them.**

## **COMMITTEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

(CCS National Office)

1. To be an effective committee member I make a personal commitment to:
2. Accept the constitutional responsibility which come with being a committee member.
3. Support the philosophy, aims, objectives and policy, working for the common good of all people with .....
4. Allocate sufficient time before coming to meetings to ensure adequate preparation.
5. Be punctual, be focused during the meeting and remain until the end of the meeting.
6. Ensure written reports on items I want discussed are provided to the Manager in time to be circulated, or at least are made available to members at the opening of the meeting.
7. Remember who we serve - .....
8. Avoid having hidden agendas or operating from vested interest.
9. Adhere to established and agreed communication channels and meeting procedures, respecting those formally allocated leadership roles while taking initiative myself when there is need.
10. Be brief, keep to the issue being discussed and recognise the time limitations that apply.
11. Welcome diversity and be willing to listen attentively to others points of view.
12. Seek to contribute to an atmosphere of warmth, friendliness and courtesy, and keep a sense of humour.
13. Value frankness, avoid personal attacks or innuendoes and ensure conflict and disagreements do not become personal.

## **GLOSSARY**

Adjourn	close meeting for the time being and reconvene it later
Adopt	to approval and accept (accounts, reports or recommendations)
Agenda	list of items to be discussed at a meeting
Amendment	alteration Tao motion begin discussed by meeting
Ballot	procedure where vote are registered in writing; a vote
Card voting	procedure where union delegate holds vote a according to membership represented
Casting (vote)	extra vote exercised by chairperson when vote is tied
Chairperson	person who takes charge of a meeting
Closure(motion)	a motion to stop debate on an issue under and put the matter to the vote
Debate	discussion for or against the issue under consideration
In committee	closed to public
Facilitator	person who helps meeting to run smoothly
Financial report	accounts and financial statements presented to meeting
Minutes	formal record of meeting, usually recorded and kept by secretary
Motions an	formal proposals for meeting to consider the act of proposing issue for consideration by meeting
Move	the act of proposing an issue for consideration by meeting
Notice of motion	advance notice in writing of a proposal for meeting to consider
Point (of order)	query calling attention to a possible infringement of the rules governing a meeting
Procedure	accept rules and order of events
Proxy	the authority to act, or vote, for another

Quorum	the minimum number of people who must be present before a meeting can make valid decisions
Round	process where each member speaks in turn
Second	indicate formal support of a motion
Speaking to	speaking about the subject of a motion
Substantive	a motion which has been amended by the meeting is called a substantive motion
Standing order	the rules of a particular organisation applies to its meetings
Tied	a tied vote is one where voting is equally divided between those in favour and those against

## **FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS**

**Seizing the Moment II - Community Work Training  
Advisory Committee, PO Box 1149, Nelson**

**Leader Effectiveness Training - Thomas Gardner**

**Personnel Practices in Voluntary Agencies: New Zealand  
Federation of Voluntary Welfare Agencies, PO Box 9517,  
Wellington**

**Working in Groups - North Shore Community and Social  
Service Council, PO Box 33 284, North Shore City**

### **Training Videos**

**There are many training videos around but unfortunately  
they are very expensive to hire. We suggest you contact the  
following organisations to see if you can borrow them:**

**Your local library**

**Technical Institutes**

**Universities**

**REAP Centres**

**Government Departments**