

## A guide to better meetings

### ***Be prepared!***

Read any information sent out before the meeting, such as the Agenda or the Minutes of the last meeting. Prepare any points you want to raise.

### ***Listen!***

Listen carefully to what others have to say, and be open to other people's opinions. One of the purposes of meetings is to exchange ideas and information and to learn from each other.

### ***Participate!***

It is much more constructive to raise matters of concern to you at the meeting, rather than afterwards.

### ***Act!***

If you undertake to follow up on a task, then do so, and be ready to report back at the next meeting. Please be courteous and respectful towards each other and make sure you follow the meeting etiquettes.

### **Tips for the Chairperson/President**

1. Be prepared for each meeting and try to ensure that the other members of the group have a written agenda beforehand, if possible, so that they can also be prepared for the meeting. It may be useful to meet with the Secretary to agree an agenda in advance of a meeting, and an agenda should always include a provision for 'Any other business'.
2. Present each item for discussion, ensuring that everyone who wishes to do so gets an opportunity to speak, and that each person is listened to.
3. Give direction to meetings making sure that there is adequate time to deal with each item on the agenda.
4. Try to keep the meeting focused on the agenda
5. Call the meeting to order, if necessary (for example, if more than one person speaks at the same time or if an argument breaks out).
6. Help the process of decision making by asking people to clarify what they are saying if it is not easily understood, by summing up what someone has said and by stating clearly the decision that is being taken before it is noted in the minutes.
7. In some instances, it may be necessary to hold a vote (for example, by a show of hands) on a particular issue.
8. At the end of each meeting, make sure to arrange a date/time/venue/possible agenda items for the next meeting.

### **Tips for the Secretary**

1. Bring any correspondence received to the attention of the chairperson before the agenda is drawn up. Perhaps some element of correspondence needs inclusion on the agenda for discussion/response.

2. If necessary read the minutes of the previous meeting at the beginning of each meeting and make any necessary corrections before the minutes are signed by the chairperson.
3. Record as accurately and as fairly as possible the minutes of each meeting.
4. Remember to record attendance, excuses, apologies and the time, date and venue of each meeting.
5. Remember also to give a brief account of correspondence received/sent since the last meeting.
6. Remember that you also have a right to participate in discussions....don't allow your role to stop you from contributing to the discussion of the various matters on the agenda.
7. Remember to record decisions made, who is to implement them and when.
8. After you've written them up, check the minutes with the chairperson before the next meeting.
9. Write up the minutes as soon as possible after each meeting.