

Chairing Meetings

One of the most important roles of the Chairperson is steering a Management Committee through its business effectively and efficiently. A good Chair will be mindful of the following basic points!

Before the Meeting

- Plan the agenda with the chief officer and officers. Include items brought to you by other members. Decide the order and timing of the agenda, and who will introduce each one
- Identify which agenda items are for information, discussion, or a decision
- Be well briefed about each item, and actions taken since the last meeting
- Ensure all necessary background papers (including the last meeting's minutes) are sent out with the agenda beforehand
- Check with staff that all relevant practical arrangements have been made, e.g. room layout, visual aids, etc
- Arrive in good time before the meeting is due to start

During the Meeting

Communicate

- Start the meeting. Welcome any new members. Make any necessary introductions
- Receive apologies for absence
- Check for conflicts of interest on the items on the agenda
- Ensure that additions or amendments to minutes are recorded
- Set the scene. State the objectives of the meeting and each item
- Try to be brief when making a point

Control

- Maintain control. Set out any time limits
- Allow flexibility and freedom of expression
- Keep to the agenda
- Ensure quorum is present
- Ensure time is used effectively
- Ensure that proper minutes are taken

Coax

- Ensure full participation
- Draw out quieter members and discourage those who are monopolising the meeting
- Be prepared to highlight issues that no-one else will, and to be the one who always has to ask the awkward questions

Compare

- Weigh up contributions impartially
- All points in favour of a point should be summarised against all points not in favour

Clarify

- Ensure everyone understands what is being discussed
- Summarise
- Ensure that if jargon and abbreviations are used, all present understand them
- Ensure that decisions are recorded, together with who is going to implement them. It can be useful to record decisions on a flip-chart as they are made

Decision Making

- Ensure that decisions are taken in the context of the organisations strategy and that they are recorded, together with who is going to implement them

Guide

- Remember that above all you are there to guide the meeting
- Steer members to work harmoniously and purposefully as a team
- Keep an eye on time

At the End of the Meeting

1. Summarise decisions taken and action points to be followed up e.g. who's responsible, by when.
2. Agree a date for the next meeting - it is usually best to set dates for the year's meetings well in advance.
3. Agree what special items will be put on the agenda of the next meeting and what work needs to be done, by whom etc.
4. Ensure that the minutes are written up, checked by the Chair and sent out in good time.