

# Running Effective Meetings

Management Committee meetings are vital to the effective functioning of the committee and its ability to carry out its role. They are the means by which the Committee exercises its collective responsibility for leading the organisation.

## Overview

Meetings are necessary for:

- Decision making
- Reporting and accountability
- Review
- Problem solving
- Discussion

In reality running purposeful and participative meetings can be challenging. Common experiences include:

- Long discussions with no conclusion
- Decision making on the basis of inadequate information
- Low attendance
- Uneven participation
- Unwillingness to ask questions

These issues are not easily addressed, but meetings can become more effective if they are well planned with a clear purpose, effectively chaired, and focused on decision-making.

## Planning meetings

Management Committee meetings are more productive if they are planned beforehand. Responsibility for planning the meeting lies with the Chairperson along with the Secretary in smaller organisations, and with the most senior staff member in organisations which employ staff. However, all Management Committee members will need to ensure they have read any papers prior to the meeting and have added relevant items to the agenda.

Download: [The Secretary's Role at Meetings](#)

Download: [Checklist: What Committee Members Need Before a Meeting](#)

Plan your meetings effectively by:

- Setting dates well in advance to maximise the number of members available to attend (and sending a reminder notice)
- Clarifying the purpose or focus of the meeting
- Ensuring that staff and financial reports are concise and comprehensible
- Ensuring conflicts of interest are declared
- Ensuring that minutes and agreed actions from the previous meetings are circulated.  
Download: [Minutes Template](#)
- Ensuring that all papers are circulated well in advance
- Agreeing the meeting agenda in advance. Download: [Agenda Template](#)
- Identifying which agenda items require a decision and which are for information or discussion
- Purpose of meetings

Source: [www.diycommitteeguide.org](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org)

Planning your Management Committee meetings easier if the purpose of each meeting is clear.

Management Committee meetings are for:

- Monitoring and reviewing progress towards meeting the aims of the organisation
- Monitoring financial performance
- Ensuring all activities are consistent with the organisation's purpose and mission
- Considering applications for membership of the organisation
- Planning annual general meetings
- Initiating and reviewing internal and external policy positions and statements
- Deciding on management and governance systems and processes
- Deciding the most appropriate methods of funding raising and considering applications for funding
- Delegating work
- Discussing and making decisions on new proposals
- Planning for the future and identifying new opportunities
- Delegating work
- Deciding on appropriate staffing requirements, staff terms and conditions

However, each individual meeting may focus on one or two issues. Is there one or more development or proposal which requires a decision? Should the financial report or the staff report be considered early in the meeting because it was at the bottom of the agenda at the last meeting and did not receive sufficient attention.

A well planned agenda should clearly communicate the purpose and objectives of the meeting.

## **Effective chairing**

Chairing is a key factor in the effectiveness of meetings.

The role of the Chair is to direct discussion of the Committee, ensuring that the objectives of the meeting can be met, and that the Committee effectively fulfils its responsibility in consideration of the items on the agenda. This involves ensuring that you are well briefed about each agenda item and that:

- decisions are taken, recorded, and carried out
- the organisation's policies are applied
- there is full participation
- the agenda is followed
- there are time limits for the meeting as a whole and for agenda items

Productive meetings require the contribution of all members of the Management Committee, working as a team and taking joint responsibility for ensuring that issues are given due consideration and decisions taken.

Download: [Chairing Meetings](#)

## **Decision making**

Management committees are responsible for taking major strategic decisions and need to take decisions jointly with other members. In making any big decision, a number of steps are involved, including some or all of the following:

Source: [www.diycommitteeguide.org](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org)

- Information - ensuring the committee has read or heard all relevant information
- The goal - what is our aim and is it consistent with the aim and direction of the organisation. Agreement on the goal is a crucial stage in decision making
- Choices - what choices are available to us and what are the constraints
- The plan - how do we achieve our goal - what are the steps and what resources do we need

There are other situations where it is sensible to delegate the power to make day to day decisions to the chief officer or to a working group for example to work out the details of carrying out a policy which the whole committee has agreed to.

Decision making is much more effective if the committee establishes not only what is to be done but also how and when it will be done and by whom.

There are two common methods of making decisions:

1. By consensus
2. By taking a vote

Some organisations have a strong commitment to consensual decision making and only take a vote in exceptional circumstances. Others routinely vote on issues.

Regardless of how decisions are taken, all committee members should be clear about exactly what has been decided and decisions should be clearly minuted.

Don't forget. Each management committee member has a contribution to make to effective meetings. All members should:

- Prepare for meetings
- Forward apologies if you are unable to attend
- Use your agenda
- Listen to the speakers
- Learn from other people
- Speak up when you have something to say
- Ask questions if you are unclear or unsure
- Consider all the options and share your views
- Abide by decisions which are taken, whether you agree with them or not

Exercise: [Making meetings better](#)