

Checklist: What Committee Members Need Before a Meeting

A checklist of what information and documents management committee members need in order to contribute effectively to meetings.

All Management Committee meeting members should receive the following before a meeting takes place:

Notice of the meeting

Dates for Management Committee meetings should be set well in advance! Although this sounds obvious, no matter how often the dates are agreed, some committee members still seem to say, "I didn't have the date in my diary". However, in order for a meeting to be effective all committee members really need to be present. It will also be at the top of the agenda for the next meeting. It is a good idea to send several reminders of the dates of meetings. Some groups have their meetings on for example, the first Wednesday of every month, which means a pattern can be established.

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes are an essential record of what happened and what was decided at the previous meeting. It is important that minutes are prepared well, giving an accurate account of the most important actions and decisions taken at that meeting. The headings in the minutes should refer to the points on the relevant agenda. For you as a committee member, receiving the minutes should not be a routine act of looking them over and forgetting about them. Read them over carefully to make sure they are an accurate record - has anything important been left out? Are there matters arising from the minutes that you want to discuss further at the next meeting? Are there points for action that you have to deal with before the next meeting? Make some notes, then store the minutes in the relevant file and bring it to the next meeting.

Agenda for the forthcoming meeting

You should have already contributed to this agenda. In your induction you will have been told how to get items on the agenda for a meeting, e.g., by mentioning your items to the Chairperson after a meeting, or by ringing the Secretary by a certain date. An agenda simply lists the topics or issues that will be discussed at the meeting and should give shape and direction to the meeting.

Any relevant papers

Written reports and other written materials will often accompany the agenda circulated prior to a Management Committee meeting. These relevant papers might include:

- Work reports on key outcomes/outputs
- Financial reports
- Options paper (e.g., outline of various options related to a specific topic and how each option is likely to affect the organisation)

Management Committee members should read any papers circulated before the meeting, and it should be clear which papers are for information purposes and which are for discussion purposes. This will enable Management Committee members to be well prepared, with any questions or comments prepared prior to the meeting. Members should reflect on the agenda and decide if they have any conflicts of interest in relation to the agenda items and be ready to let the Chair know about anything relevant.