

A GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

This resource is designed to help a Chairman manage Committee Meetings and AGMs.



The Chairperson's role is to control the meetings, accept motions and amendments, rule on points of order and see that the wishes of the meeting are carried out correctly and expediently.

Meetings do not have to be run formally all the time and it is up to the Chairperson to decide how formally the meeting will be run. However there are times when you, as leader, must know the ESSENTIAL RULES in order to:

- Give everyone a fair go
- Cut out 'waffle'
- Reach decisions

AGENDA

The agenda is the basis of any meeting and gives direction, structure and purpose to the meeting. The agenda should be drawn up jointly by the Chairperson and Secretary and should be followed in order, unless the meeting directs otherwise.

The agenda should be circulated prior to the meeting so that members may attend the meeting prepared to make a well-informed contribution.

Call the meeting to order at least several minutes before the opening. Starting on time is essential.

THE QUORUM

The constitution may specify a quorum

- A quorum is a specified minimum number of eligible members who must be present at a meeting to make the proceedings valid at the specified starting time.
- If necessary, the Chairperson may use his or her power to delay the appointed starting time to give every opportunity for

the necessary number to be present. Being satisfied that a quorum is present, the meeting should be formally declared open.

- If the numbers at the meeting fall below the quorum at any stage during proceedings of the meeting, no further decisions should be made.
- Club rules may allow partial attendance at meetings and therefore the meeting can continue.

THE MEETING

- As far as possible always try to open the meeting on time.
- Declare the meeting officially open. This is important as the business of the meeting is recorded from this point on;
- Identify the meeting by quoting specific title and class of it,
- e.g. make the opening a firm statement. "I declare this regular monthly committee meeting of the Yore Rugby Club open".

Attendance

- Record all members present;
- Introduce any visitors or special guests and formally welcome them to the meeting; and
- Call for apologies.
- Ask for a formal motion that apologies be accepted.

Minutes

- It is the Chairperson's duty to ask for any corrections to the minutes of the previous

meeting (amend if necessary) and then call for the motion.

"It is the wish of the meeting that I sign these minutes (as corrected, if they were amended) as a true and accurate record of the previous club committee meeting held on... (date)."

- The sole purpose of confirming or adopting minutes is to ensure their accuracy. Reading lengthy minutes in detail is unnecessary, boring and destructive to a meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes

- List matters to be decided on the agenda;
- Discussion should be confined strictly to matters in the minutes which will not be covered in reports; and
- Matters arising from the minutes are usually confined to specific questions or actions someone was appointed to take.

Correspondence

- The Chairperson should ask the Secretary to present a list of inward and outward correspondence, in chronological order and put it to the meeting;
- The Chairperson should request a formal motion...
"that all inward correspondence be received"
and
"that outward correspondence be approved";
- No discussion should be allowed before the motion is presented;

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- The Secretary should read to the club or group, the date, meaningful contents of the letter and the signatory; and
- Any member may request that the whole context of the letter be read to the meeting.

Reports

The Treasurer

- The Chairperson calls on the Treasurer for the regular financial report;
- The Chairperson asks for any discussion arising from the report:
“The report is now open for discussion”;
- A list of all accounts for payment to be paid should be presented to the committee; and
- A formal motion is needed to adopt the report. “That the report be received”.

Committee

- These reports should be brief; and the committee Chairperson should present them beforehand (in writing) and during the meeting, so that they can be incorporated into the minutes.
- If you can insist on written reports, you will speed up your meetings.
- Here’s a simple formula for reports:
 - WHAT?
 - WHY?
 - WHO?
 - WHERE?
 - WHEN?

- HOW?
- HOW MUCH? and
- RECOMMENDATIONS.

- This format keeps reports ‘on the point’. The recommendations (when appropriate) are almost like a ‘motion’ to give the executive something definite to discuss.
- Discussion and action may follow each report; and
- Each report must be adopted after presentation and discussion. “That the report be received”. No seconder is required.

Other Reports

- These should be brief and deal with specific topics.

Discussion on Motions

- The constitution should lay down how much notice to give the Chairperson of business to be discussed at a meeting;
- These motions must be placed on the agenda; and
- Any motions proposed without sufficient notice may be rejected by the Chairperson but are accepted as notices of motion for the next meeting.

MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- All items of business requiring a decision must come before the meeting by way of a motion and if passed, becomes a resolution. A motion should be proposed before the Chairperson allows any debate or discussion on the topic. This promotes an orderly discussion. Once a motion has

been moved the Chairperson should make sure discussion doesn’t depart from the point.

Moving a Motion

- The mover, standing and addressing the chair introduces the motion,
“I move that....”
- This introduces an item of business for the meeting’s scrutiny and has the floor when there is no other motion before the meeting.
- The mover must state their case to the meeting on that motion only and may not be interrupted by the Chairperson unless the motion is frivolous or ridiculous and is unlikely to be seconded.
- The motion should be clear, concise and unambiguous and not be introduced to the meeting until it is clear.
- The mover is granted right of reply at the end of the debate.

The Secunder

- This implies there is support for the motion. The speaker must introduce his/her support with ...
“I second that motion”.
- The seconder, who has no right of reply, may speak when he or she seconds the motion or reserve a speech until after further debate.
- If there is no seconder the motion lapses.
- Immediately a motion has been proposed and seconded the Chairperson can save time and cut out repetition by declaring..

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“Does anyone wish to speak AGAINST the motion?”

- If NO, the motion may be put to the vote.
- If YES, the order of debate should be speaker against, then for (i.e. alternately), with no speaker (except the seconder’s reserved speech and mover’s right of reply, point of order, or personal explanation, e.g. correcting a misquote) speaking more than once.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments are introduced as follows :

“Mr Chairperson (or Madam Chairperson), I would like to make an amendment that...”;

And must :

- be clear and precise;
- not negate the motion.
- A competent amendment may:
 - Add to the motion
 - Subtract from the motion
 - Substitute words within the motion
 - Alter the wording of the motion;
- Neither the mover nor the seconder to the original motion or prior amendments may move or second an amendment;
- Amendments should be placed before the meeting one at a time (taken in the order in which they affect the terms of the original motion);

- When an amendment is raised, all that have spoken previously may speak again;
- Before any vote is taken, the Chairperson should make sure the meeting understands the points for and against and the actual wording of the amendment;
- When an amendment is carried, it is incorporated in the motion, which can then be further discussed or amended; and
- If an amendment is lost the original or previously amended motion again has the floor and the latest amendment is not incorporated into the motion.

ADVICE ON AMENDMENTS

- Restrict the number of amendments to two for each original motion;
- To avoid confusion, amendments to amendments are not advised;
- Each amendment must be relevant;
- Insist that amendments be handed in writing to the Secretary before voting;
- Before members are asked to vote, the amendment is read to the meeting; and
- Amendments should be discussed and ratified ONE AT A TIME.

CLOSURE OF DEBATE

- The Chairperson should decide when the vote is to be put;
- The mover of the original motion should then be offered their right of reply;

- The motion or amendment to be ratified must be read out to the members, so that all clearly understand the motion or amendment; and
- The Chairperson could also summarise the arguments for and against.

PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

- These are new motions and effect the procedure of a meeting, not the substance of the decisions;
- They are commonly used to speed up a decision making process or to quash a substantive motion before it is put to the vote.
- All procedural motions need seconders;
- They may be introduced when either a substantive motion or amendment is under discussion and further discussion must be suspended until the Chairperson accepts or rejects the procedural motion at his/her discretion;
- Action on procedural motions requires a more intimate knowledge of meeting procedure and, except for the simple procedural motions, should be discouraged as they can easily become destructive and time consuming.
- A procedural motion may not be moved or seconded by a person who has:
 - moved the original motion;
 - seconded the original motion; and
 - spoken on the motion or amendment being discussed prior to the procedural motion being moved;

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- All procedural motions suspend debate on amendments and motions, except for “The Previous Question” which only covers motions, not amendments.
- Examples of formal motions :
 - “That the question be left to lie on the table”;
 - “That the meeting proceed to the next business”;
 - “That the previous question be voted upon”;
 - “That discussion be closed”.

VOTING

- At the end of a debate, the Chairperson puts the motion to the vote. Different forms of voting are:
 - By voices
 - By show of hands
 - By members standing
 - By secret ballot
 - By a division.
- Unless specified otherwise in the constitution a motion can become a binding resolution by a simple majority vote (that is one where at least half the voting members present vot in favour)
- By voices is often enough to cause the Chairperson to declare the result. If there is any doubt on the voice vote, the Chairperson may call, or be called upon by a member, for a show of hands. The constitution should nominate the necessary majority needed to ensure motions are resolved.
- Unless someone demands a ballot or division immediately after the voice or

show of hands vote had been declared, the decision of the Chairperson is binding.

- If there is an equal number of votes for and against on the first and second show of hands and after a ballot, the proposal is rejected.
- The CONSTITUTION should provide for voting power of the Chairperson who may have:
 - a deliberate vote only (that is an ordinary vote in the normal voting procedure)
 - a casting vote only (used only in a tied vote)
 - a deliberate and casting vote (effectively two votes);
 - no vote.
- If the motion (as amended) is lost, the meeting proceeds to the next item of business.

POINTS OF ORDER

- Points of Order are questions as to the procedure of a debate or the meeting itself, and like procedural motions can be very useful or open to abuse.
- This is introduced by
“I rise to a point of order...”.
Or simply
“Point of Order Mr Chairman...”
- It covers a breach of rules or decorum.
- The point of order must be made when the breach occurs.
- No seconder is required.
- The speaker may be interrupted.

- The point of order is not open to debate, not subject to amendment.
- It is subject to the Chairperson’s ruling.

General Business

- The Chairperson can decide whether a point should be discussed, although only relatively minor points can be brought up;
- Notice of motion for the next meeting may be brought up with a written copy of the motion, signed and dated, being handed to the Secretary; and
- The Chairperson should restrict discussion to the interest of the meeting.

Next Meeting

- Discuss the time, date and venue for the next meeting to ensure everyone knows the details.

Closure

- This is the signal to say that no further business is being conducted at the meeting;
- The time for winding up proceedings is up to the Chairperson;
- The Chairperson should close the meeting when there is no further business or when continuing would serve no worthwhile purpose;
- The normal way of closing is for the Chairperson to rise, thank members for their cooperation, thank visitors, wait for silence and announce,

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"I declare this... (monthly) meeting of the Yore Rugby Club closed";

- Then the Chairperson should emphasise that the meeting is over by leaving the chair as soon as possible whilst declaring that further discussion is unofficial and leaderless.

THE CHAIR – ESSENTIAL TASKS

A person in the chair leads but does not direct. Although he or she controls procedure and conduct, that person is in charge of the meeting which is conducted for the benefit of the members.

Before the Meeting

- Planning is essential. Before the meeting discuss the agenda with the Secretary to determine what should be accomplished;
- Know the constitution and standing orders for the conduct of meetings. Departure from any special rules of procedure could make the business of the meeting invalid; and
- Act as host – meet and greet your members. You are responsible for making them feel welcome and wanted.

At the Meeting

- Don't sit in the 'chair' until you are ready to start the meeting;
- Follow the agenda strictly, unless directed otherwise by the meeting.
- Know the order of the agenda;
- Keep the meeting moving in the desired direction. Be firm but tactful when members deviate from the issue under discussion;
- Try to be impartial – be there for the benefit of the meeting;
- Listen attentively and keep a concise summary of proceedings;
- Attempt to get all members to contribute to the meeting;
- Ensure that there is fair discussion on each issue and that all points are expressed before the meeting is called upon to vote;
- Direct the order of speaking – mover first, then others, alternating between speakers for and against a motion;
- Rule on points of order;
- Be enthusiastic – zest instils enthusiasm into the members;
- Attempt to keep the meeting moving, don't have any awkward breaks; and
- Arise and leave the chair at the end of the meeting or the beginning of any recess.

A Chairperson should have the following phrases on the tip of his or her tongue:

- "Will someone move the motion?"
- "A seconder for the motion, please?"
- "Will members please vote?"
- "All in favour please say 'aye'."
- "All against please say 'no'."
- "I think the 'ayes' have it."
- "I think the 'noes' have it."
- "Members, what is your wish?"
- "I suggest..." (here suggest a motion, amendment or course of action)
- "I rule the amendment out of order."
- "Thank you members."

Adapted from "Taking the Lead : A Guide for Club Presidents"
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