



Good Practice For Committee Meetings

We often have queries from our members about the running of their PTA or PA committee and whether there are any proper procedures which should be followed. Most committees operate quite successfully in a fairly informal way and most decisions are relatively straightforward. Informality is perfectly acceptable, but it is always worth following the good practice outlined below and keeping accurate records of what has been discussed and agreed.

The Agenda

The agenda is essentially a programme for the meeting. It lists all the things which have to be discussed.

At the top there should be a heading which states the name of the organisation, and the date, place and time of the meeting. After that there should be separately numbered items, some of which are fixed and common to all meetings. An agenda would usually look something like the following.

1. Sederunt (literally "those who were sitting"): this a reminder to record the names of all those attending.
2. Apologies: at this point, apologies from those who cannot attend should be noted.
3. Approval of the minutes: the minutes of the last meeting should be approved as an accurate record of that meeting. Any inaccuracies should be corrected at this stage.
4. Matters arising which are not otherwise on the agenda: this is a chance to give a brief update on any matters discussed at the last meeting or to confirm that something has been done as agreed. However, any major item which was discussed at the last meeting and which is still ongoing should be listed as a separate item on the agenda.
5. Financial report: the Treasurer should report briefly on any income and expenditure since the last meeting and give the current balance.
6. Items of business: each topic should be listed as a separately numbered item.
7. Correspondence: the Secretary should briefly mention any correspondence s/he has received.
8. AOCB (Any other competent business):
no major items should be brought up at this point but this is a good point for indicating what items could/should be included in the next meeting or to report some factual piece of information, ask a brief question etc.
9. Date of next meeting:

The Minutes

These are the record of the meeting and the items in the minutes should match the items in the agenda, starting with the name of the organisation and the date, time and venue of the meeting. There should then be separate items listing

1. Sederunt: the names of those who were there.
2. Any apologies:
3. Approval of the previous minutes: any agreed changes should be recorded in these minutes.
4. Financial report:
5. Separate items of business: when it comes to "minuting" items of business, it is sensible to record the topic, the main points of discussion and any decisions. It is not a good idea to record who said what. Instead the minute should read "there was a wide-ranging discussion in which the following points were made". However, it is particularly important to record any action that should follow from the discussion and who has agreed to undertake it.
6. The minutes should conclude by recording any correspondence, matters arising and the date of the next meeting as separate items.

Decisions

Normally decisions simply "emerge" from meetings as the result of a general sense of agreement. However, where this is not the case, then a simple vote should be taken.

Role of the Office Bearers

The Chairperson

The Chairperson of the PTA should be a parent and is responsible for calling any meeting and setting the agenda. S/he is also responsible for getting through the agenda. It's a good idea to identify in advance what the major items are, what decisions have to be made and then make sure that these items get adequate time. If necessary, the Chairperson should draw the discussion to a close and either ask for a decision or agree that the item will be continued at the next meeting. The Chairperson also decides when it is necessary

to have a formal vote and has a casting vote in the event of a tie.

During the meeting, the Chairperson can propose that the agenda is taken in a different order, but the minutes should still agree with the agenda as originally written.

The Chairperson can call an extra meeting as long as everyone on the committee is informed of the date, time and venue of the meeting.

The Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for taking and writing up the minutes. S/he should show these to the chairperson for immediate correction before sending them out to the rest of the committee. These draft minutes are then corrected and formally approved at the next meeting. The secretary is usually responsible for any correspondence and for keeping a record of all meetings. This means keeping a file with the agendas and minutes of each meeting in it.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for handling the money and maintaining the financial records. S/he usually holds the cheque book or similar and deals with the bank or building society.

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