



GUIDE TO RUNNING MEETINGS

Residents' groups organise four different types of meetings, how they are managed and publicised should be detailed in your constitution.

1. **Public meetings**, are meetings that are open to all the residents and staff and community partners are often invited to attend.

2. **Committee meetings**, are meetings for the Committee to deal with management issues. They are usually open to interested residents who request to be invited.

3. **Annual General meetings (AGM)** is held once a year and all the residents are invited to attend. There will be a report from the Treasurer about what money has been raised and spent and an overview of how the year has gone from the chair person. If committee members are elected each year there will be an election. This is also the meeting where amendments or changes to the constitution are made.

4. **Extraordinary or Special General meeting** is held when there is a crisis, for instance, the constitution needs amending and you can't wait until the date of the AGM or a member of the committee decides to step down before year end. Your constitution will cover how many residents need to request the meeting and how much notice you must give.

All committee or public meetings should be minuted and the minutes sent to the committee and members.

The Chair of the Residents' Group will run most meetings. This isn't an easy job but the tips below will help.

- Welcome everyone to the meeting and if you have new members or visitors ensure they are introduced and know everyone's names.
- Make sure everyone knows where the toilets are and the fire escapes, when/if refreshments are being served and when the meeting finishes.
- If the meeting has a specific purpose for instance to plan an event then start the meeting with a summary statement about the event and the decisions that have to be made by the end of the meeting.
- Separate facts from opinions. Ask committee members for the facts, then summarise these and then ask them for their opinions. Be careful to ensure that any decisions made are fair and not based upon individual's personal opinions.
- At the end of a discussion summarise the decision made and who is responsible for undertaking the various tasks, how much time they have and who to get in contact with if they have problems achieving them.
- Encourage all members of the committee to voice their ideas and opinions, ensuring the more 'outspoken' members do not dominate the discussions and 'quieter' members have their say. You can do this by asking questions " and what does the rest of the group feel about us organising a children's' event, how about you Sam, as a school governor you will have some valuable experience in this area, what do you think?"
- At the end of meetings thank everyone for attending giving special thanks to any visitors/presenters and to the person who arranged the venue/refreshments. Remember to remind everyone of the date of the next meeting.

Taking minutes

One of the important jobs of the **Secretary** is to take the minutes at meetings. The minutes are a brief record of what was said at committee and general meetings, any decisions made, lists of actions individuals have agreed to do and by when. They make sure that everyone knows what the committee is doing and everyone's input is valued and recorded on paper. Minutes are then distributed to all the members.

Agendas

Each meeting should have an agenda. Copies of this can be given to everyone at the meeting or written up on a flip chart or white board. A simple agenda listed below.

Welcome and introduction from the Chair to include housekeeping; where the toilets and fire escapes are located and introduce any new people.

Apologies, the Secretary records on the minutes the names of those who are unable to attend and have apologised in advance.

Approve the minutes from the last meeting. Ask someone who attended the last meeting to check the minutes are a true reflection of what was said and agreed and then ask a second person to second his or her approval. This is then recorded in the minutes, minuted, if there are items missing or that are incorrect they are recorded by the Secretary and the minutes are changed and presented at the next meeting for checking approval in the same way.

Report from the Treasurer - the Treasurer says how much is in the bank account, how much has been fund raised and lists any larger items of expenditure made since the last meeting.

Main items for discussion: For instance an update on organising the street party or jumble sale, tidying up an area of the estate or the gardening project or progress on arranging the next public meeting (general meeting) or AGM (Annual General Meeting)

AOB (Any other business) this is for any item that is important but was not put on the agenda. If the item is too big and would take too long to discuss, the Chair can recommend that it goes on to the next meetings agenda.

Date of next meeting

Disclosures

Sometimes members of the committee will have to declare an interest in an item on the agenda; this is called a disclosure. For instance you might be making a decision about which local business to select for a certain service and one of the committee members works or owns one of the businesses under discussion.

The person in question would 'declare their interest' and then leave the room and not take part in the decision making process.

This makes sure that the residents' group is fair and accountable and that members do not personally benefit from being on the committee.

Electing new committee members

The elections take place at your annual general meeting (AGM).

Your constitution will contain information on how often you hold an election (usually once a year) and how many years' residents can hold a committee office. For instance your constitution might state that a person can only be an elected Chair for three years in a row. Your constitution will also state how many people you need at your AGM for it to be quorum – have enough people there to represent the wishes of your estate, neighbourhood or block of flats.

The committee need to decide how they are going to manage the election. There are different ways.

Open election, where a person nominates himself or herself for a specific role, like that of the treasurer's and then, there is a show of hands. Residents can only vote for one resident per officer post on the committee. The resident who receives the most votes is elected.

Closed election, where you produce a voting paper. Residents attending the meeting complete the voting form and put it in a box. An independent person, like a member of staff, counts the votes and they give the final figure during the meeting.

Publicising the meeting

It is important to get people to this meeting so you will need to work hard to make sure everyone knows about it. Maybe combine it with a social activity that takes place after the meeting. AGM's are often quite short meetings unless they include a final section on action planning for the next year.