



Getting Started Factsheet 5

MINUTES AND AGENDAS

Good agendas and minutes can make a significant contribution to both the effective running of an organisation and to the efficiency of the meetings.

Items for an agenda can be collated by the Secretary and presented to the committee members before the meeting.

A well thought out agenda with a balance between matters of report and interesting discussion points can go some way to ensuring that the meeting is interesting to those attending.

An Agenda should be kept as concise as possible – a very long detailed agenda is set up to fail, as meetings go on too long and people have to leave. It is ideal if you can keep the length of the meeting to 1.5 hours.

Agenda items should cover business which cannot be dealt with in matters arising from previous minutes.

It may be helpful to arrange the date and time and venue of the next meeting at the beginning of the Agenda so that if committee members leave early they are included in the decision.

Similarly, clear concise minutes recording the decisions taken will also be useful to members unable to attend the meeting and to other people, such as the auditor who has a right to make sure that expenditure was properly authorised.

Minutes are not the same as notes, which may be the record of an informal group discussion, where the group itself is not formally an 'association', committee, or sub-committee but it is nevertheless useful to have a record of decisions.

It is helpful if all members of the committee can have a copy of the agenda and minutes before the meeting, so that they can think about the topics which are to be raised and so that the time of the meeting does not have to be spent in reading the minutes out loud at the beginning.

It will help the secretary to have a wallet in which to keep details of items to come up at the next meeting. This ensures that items are not missed off the agenda but also helps in preparing it.

WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA THEN?

A list of typical agenda items is set out below, but what goes where?

- **Matters Arising**

Only brief matters from the minutes which need to have been followed up, or action taken. **NOT** major items, which should be allocated an item to themselves. Don't let matters arising become a means whereby members start to re-discuss what was decided last time.

- **Correspondence**

This deals with the fairly mundane letters and items which come in. If a letter deals with an important topic, it should be specified on the agenda. Correspondence is not the heading to put items where you think a letter will need to be sent.

- **Reports**

Space is usually allocated so that officers can report. Try to find out before the meeting who will want to report and only place those items on the agenda. The one exception to this is the Treasurer's Report, which should always be on the agenda.

- **Special Points for Discussion**

These will be the items sufficiently important to have a heading of their own.

- Try to put the items in a logical order.
- Try to balance reports and discussion to keep the meeting interesting.
- Try to have the last item an interesting discussion before people go home, rather than an argument, so that the meeting finishes on a pleasant note.

- **Any Other Business**

Important items should not be dealt with under this heading. It is a means of raising agenda items for the next meeting. If someone has an important item for discussion not on the agenda, the chair should be asked at the beginning of the meeting to make space on the agenda.

AGENDA

When the notice of a meeting is sent out, it is normal practice to include the agenda, which is a list of items to be discussed at a meeting, these being listed in a certain order and numbered for easy reference as follows:

1. Apologies

2. Date/Time/Venue for the next meeting
3. Minutes of the Last Meeting
4. Matters Arising out of the Minutes – corrections / amendments
5. Correspondence
6. Reports
7. Any Special Points for Discussion
8. Any Other Business

As it is the notice of the meeting, the agenda is sent to all who are entitled to attend. It is usually duplicated and care should be taken to 'run off' additional copies for members who may omit to bring a copy to the meeting.

MINUTES

Details of any decisions or resolutions or business discussed at the meeting are recorded and preserved. These are known as Minutes. They are either written in a Minute Book or typed on loose sheets and kept in a loose- leaf file.

The minutes should be written up as soon as possible after the meeting and the third person and past tense are used.

- ***Order of Minutes***

1. Description of meeting, including time, date and place.
2. Names of those present – Chair's name appearing first, followed by names of the officers.
3. Apologies received.
4. Place, date and time of the next meeting.
5. Approval and signing of Minutes of last meeting.
6. Matters Arising.
7. Correspondence.
8. Reports of Officers.
9. General business discussed – with details of any resolutions taken.
10. Place, date and time of next meeting.
11. Place for Chairman's signature.

12. Date on which Minutes are signed.

13. Any Other Business.

- ***What About the Minutes Then?***

The Minutes should begin with the NAME OF THE ORGANISATION. Followed by the date, time and place of the meeting.

In the case of a committee meeting the names of those present should be listed, as well as those who have sent their apologies for absence.

- ***Approval of Minutes***

The minutes should be approved by those present at the next meeting and signed by the Chair. They then become the legal record of what took place. The only amendments which should be made before signature should be corrections of inaccuracy. If a mistake is found after signature, a separate resolution will have to be passed and minuted making the correction.

Minutes should not be a play but should be a record of the decisions made at the meeting including the names of any members authorised to take action. It is not necessary to record the discussion leading to the decision in detail.

Minutes should be impartial, are usually written in the 'third person' and would not normally be expected to contain the names of people other than proposers or seconders of motions, or people delegated to act.

It is helpful if the minutes can be separated into topics with headings, with numbers or initials, for example 1(a), 1(b), etc., so that they can easily be picked out later.

- ***Keeping the Minutes***

Minutes need to be filed, in which case care needs to be taken not to lose signed copies.