

The role of the Chair

How to Chair a meeting

What are the Chairperson's main responsibilities?

- Getting the meeting through all the business in the time allotted.
- Making sure it is clear what decisions have been made.
- Making sure it is clear who is going to do what tasks.
- Keeping the meeting in order -stopping interruptions and irrelevancies, and allowing everyone to be heard.

The agenda

- You will need an agenda to help you organise the business to be discussed at the meeting.
- If the meeting is very small and informal, you could simply agree the agenda at the start of the meeting.
- If the meeting is larger or more formal, or you want to let people know in advance what you will be discussing, you will need to prepare an agenda before the meeting. Sometimes the Chair and Secretary do this together.

The sample agenda below shows you what items are usually included in an agenda.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
 2. Minutes of the last meeting –agree these are a correct record
 3. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting
 4. Correspondence
 5. Treasurers Report
 6. Any Other Business
 7. Date of next meeting
- It is useful to have a record of everyone who was at the meeting, so pass around a piece of paper for people's names and addresses.

Some helpful tips

Keeping the meeting in order

How well the meeting runs depends on the people at the meeting, as well as the Chair. It makes a Chair's job easier if the group has agreed some basic rules about how they want the meetings to work – think about discussing this in your group.

Making sure everyone's view is heard

- In larger and more formal meetings it is usual to ask people to speak 'through the Chair'. This means they put their hand up when they want to speak, and then wait until the Chair tells them it is their turn. The Chair keeps track of whose turn it is.
- In a smaller meeting you may want to be more informal, but you still need to make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak. Be aware that some people find it more difficult to talk at meetings than others, and try to make it easier for them. On the other hand, some people like to talk all the time, and you need to be firm about stopping them.
- It can help to say something like "is there anyone who hasn't talked yet who would like to say something about this..." or "Marilyn has spoken several times already so I'm going to let Kevin go next..."
- Sometimes it works well to go round everyone in turn asking them what they think about a particular issue.
- Before a decision is made, or you move on to another item, check that everyone has had their say.
- Don't let people interrupt all the time. This is really frustrating for the person who is trying to talk, and leads to frayed tempers. Politely ask people to wait until the person speaking has finished.

Getting through the business

- Keep an eye on the time, and remind the rest of the meeting -e.g. "we need to move on if we are going to cover all the other business. We need to make a decision about.....our options are...."
- If it is clear you are not going to get through all the business, suggest that some items are left until next time, e.g. "this discussion clearly needs more time, I propose we give it an extra 15 minutes and drop the report back on the trip to London..."
- It is always better, if possible, to give a clear suggestion, rather than say something vague which leads to endless debate.

Drawing it all together

- At the end of a discussion, summarise the main points and what has been decided.
- If the meeting has agreed to do something, make sure you've also agreed who is going to do it.

- Make sure the minute taker has had time to take down the decision and who will do it.

Some things to avoid

- Don't use your position to push your views
- Don't talk too much yourself
- Don't let someone talk a lot because they are your friend or you are a bit wary of them
- Don't ignore people who want to speak

The role of the Secretary

The exact work of the Secretary will vary from organisation to organisation. It is worth having a discussion to agree what the responsibilities of all the Management Committee members should be.

This list can be used as a guide to the Secretary's job:

- Taking minutes in meetings.
- Keeping files of past minutes and reports.
- Letting people know when and where the next meeting is and what it is about.
- Helping to prepare agendas for meetings with the Chairperson.
- Writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group.
- Keeping members informed of what correspondence has been sent out and received.
- Keeping a record of membership.
- Keeping a record of important phone numbers.

How you organise this work is up to your group to decide. You may want to divide the jobs up amongst a number of people. You could have a minutes secretary, a correspondence secretary and a membership secretary.

Or you may want to have a Secretary and Chairperson who work closely together, and share some of these tasks. It just depends on the size of your group, the amount of time people have available, the skills people have, and what people like doing.

Taking Minutes

Taking minutes is an important part of the job, and can be a bit daunting when you first start.

The basic tasks for the minute-taker are:

- Taking rough notes during your meetings.
- Writing up these notes neatly or typing them out.
- Copying and distributing them to relevant people.
- Keeping all minutes together in a file for future reference.

Tips on being a good secretary

Organisation

- File things! This is *very* important - you need to be able to find papers and reports quickly and easily. Get a stack of cheap cardboard folders and label them. Have a separate file for every important issue.
- File things *quickly*. Don't let huge mounds of papers you haven't looked at build up. If you sort them out regularly it is a small and manageable job.
- Have a 'to do' list or notebook. It helps to have everything you need to do written down in one place. Don't rely on your memory.
- Get a book to record correspondence the group receives.
- Get a diary to record dates of future meetings.

Share information

- Make sure information that comes to you gets passed on, or publicised more widely. Often things for a group are sent to the Secretary and never get any further.
- Work closely with other Committee members, particularly the Chair.

Don't take on everything

- A common complaint from Secretaries is that they end up doing everything. Be clear with your Committee about what tasks you will do.
- If you start to feel overburdened, talk about it with your Committee, and see if jobs can be shared out more.

The role of the Treasurer

How to look after your group's money

The aim of this information sheet is to help the treasurer to look after a group's money. It looks at basic rules for handling money day-to-day and keeping records of money which you receive and pay out.

The following topics are covered in this sheet:

- **The treasurer and the committee**
- **Why keep accounts?**
- **Basic rules for dealing with money**
- **Receiving money**
- **Paying out money**
- **Writing up the cash book**
- **End of month procedure**
- **Reports to the committee**
- **Report to the AGM**
- **Independent Examination of Accounts**

The treasurer and the committee

- As treasurer, you have day-to-day responsibility for dealing money. It is your job to keep accounts and report to the committee.
- The whole committee is responsible for deciding how the money will be raised and spent.
- Apart from small amounts (which may be left to the treasurer's discretion) the whole committee should agree on spending decisions. The committee, not just the treasurer, is responsible for ensuring that proper records are kept.
- Sometimes the committee leaves the treasurer to get on with alone, only showing an interest at the AGM or when something goes wrong. This is worrying for the treasurer and also means the group does not make the best use of its money.

Why keep accounts?

- Because your group is responsible to all its members for any money which it receives and spends; every member has the right to know how the money has been used.
- To keep track of money (e.g. to ensure that you have collected all the subs or to avoid paying a bill twice) and to know how much you have available.
- To help make the best use of your money. Your records will help you work out how much money the group needs next year and then budget accordingly.
- To help with fundraising.

- If you apply for a grant to the Council or to a charitable trust, they will ask to see accounts as proof that the group is well run and will use the grant properly.
- If you are trying to decide whether to run a raffle or have a stall at a local fete then past records will show which raises the most money.

Basic rules for dealing with money

Each group may deal with its money in a slightly different way depending on circumstances. But there are basic rules for dealing with money which apply to everyone.

- Be methodical. Keep clear records at the time of money which you receive or pay out. Do not rely on memory to write it up later.
- Make sure that you have paperwork for any money which you take in or pay out. Keep paperwork in number or date order. This is best done by using treasury tags or a ring-binder. It will make it much easier to look through your records.
- Always record the full amount of cash you receive or pay out. For example, if you take in cash from a jumble sale and then use some of it to buy tea and coffee, you should record both the total takings and the cost of the supplies.
- Keep the group's cash separate from your own.
- Do not hold on to large amounts of cash; bank it as soon as possible.
- Check regularly that the cash in your tin equals the balance in your cash book.
- Building society or bank account - make sure that two people are required to sign cheques or withdrawal forms. Many groups put down the treasurer, chair and secretary as signatories to the account – any two of the three sign the cheque.
- Check bank statements carefully.

Receiving money

Issue a receipt whenever you take in cash. It is best to use a small duplicate book with numbered pages. Record the total, the date, the name of the person handing over the cash and where the cash came from (e.g. subs). Hand over the top copy as the receipt and keep your copy in the book.

When you receive a cheque, file the paperwork (e.g. a covering letter with a grant) and write on it the date on which you received the cheque.

Paying out money

- Get invoices or till receipts for all purchases. This rule applies to both cash and cheques.
- When you pay out cash, write out a petty cash voucher. Ask the person receiving the cash to sign for it. Staple the till receipt, firm's bill or bus tickets to the voucher. Give the voucher a number and keep them in number order.

- Paying by cheque: make a note on the cheque stub of the value of the cheque and who it is made out to. Write the number of the cheque on the firm's bill.

Writing up the cash book

Your book-keeping will depend on the circumstances of your group. There is no single "right" way. It is best to keep things as straightforward as possible.

Some basic tips for writing up your cash book.

- Keep separate records of (a) your cash and (b) your bank or building society account.
- Have separate columns in your cash book to record each amount which you receive or spend and also to show how much you have left (the balance). Do this for both the cash account and the bank account. (If you have a building society treasurers or savings account the balance is shown in the pass book) This will help to ensure that you do not spend more money than you have available.
- You may be asked to show how much the group has made from jumble sales, or grants or subs. Or you may need to know the spending on phone calls, stationery or bingo cards. So, each time you take in or pay out money record the amount under a heading of this type. There are no standard headings - use ones which are useful to your group, such as items of expenditure which are covered by your Council grant.

End of month procedure

Cash account

- If you have a lot of entries each month in your cash account, it is best to rule off the page at the end of the month. Add up each column. Check that the balance in your book is the same as the cash in the tin. Carry over the balance to the new month.
- If you have very few entries simply check your balance against the cash in your tin.
- If you cannot get your cash account to tally with the cash in the tin, do not carry over the error to next month. Write "error in cash" and adjust the book so that it tallies with the actual cash.

Cheque account

- When the bank statement arrives, this gives you the opportunity to check that you have written everything correctly in your account book and that the bank has not made any mistakes with your money.
- Tick off each cheque in your book which appears on the bank statement (and any sums which you have paid in). Have you written any cheques which do not yet appear on the statement? Did you make a last minute deposit which is not on the statement? You will need to take these into account.
- NB. Once you are satisfied that you have written up your book correctly, it is your book (not the bank statement) which tells you how much money is available to spend.

Reports to the committee

- Your report gives a summary of the information in your cash book so that the committee knows the financial position. The committee should decide how much detail it needs and whether a verbal report is enough.
- You should always be in a position at any meeting to say how much money the group has available. For small groups, this may even be enough. However, to give the committee a more useful picture, it is best to report:
 - money available in cash account and bank or building society
 - amount received and amount spent so far this year
 - expected bills and income over the next month or quarter

Report to the AGM

This must be a written report showing:

- Total amount received, with a breakdown of the receipts (i.e. How much the group received from grants, subs, bingo and so on).
- Total amount paid out, with a breakdown of the payments (how much the group spent on stamps, stationery, etc, and large one-off payments).
- The amount of money left (“balance of funds”) and where the funds are held. You should show how much is in the bank or building society (and give its name) and how much you hold in cash or a float.

Independent Examination of Accounts

- There is no legal requirement for most small community organisations to have an independent examination of their accounts.
- Many organisations, however, include in their constitution a clause that accounts must be independently examined before they are presented to the AGM.
- Some funders make it a condition of the grant.
- Many small groups choose to have an independent examination as it:
 - Provides an itemised written account for the treasurer to present to the AGM.
 - Helps reassure a new or unconfident treasurer.
 - Helps sort out any problems with the accounts.
 - Demonstrates to members and to other organisations that the accounts are in order.
- The independent examiner need not be a professional accountant but must be someone from outside the group who is competent to examine accounts, such as a finance worker, bank manager or Council treasurer.

