**CHAIRING SKILLS**

The success of a meeting will often depend on the chair’s abilities (no pressure). Sometimes discussion can be lively, even heated. Then the business isn’t finished and the decisions are not clear. Other times a discussion can be so tightly controlled, few people get the chance to take part. It is the chairperson’s job to make sure everyone can take part, to make clear decisions and to finish the business. Here is our guide to being a chairing success.

1. Participation

The chair should encourage all committee members to contribute. Either actively involve all members or have set committee reports on the agenda. It is important to make sure that all contributions are treated with respect and that if a member puts forward a view it is not ridiculed or angrily shouted down. A chairperson must keep order and make sure only one person is speaking at any one time.

1. Debate

As chair, you must keep the discussion on the key topic/s, and watch the time. Familiarise yourself with the items that need to be discussed. There will be times when you need to clarify the discussion. An ability to understand what is being said will be vital. A chair must:

* Highlight proposals that are made in the meeting. θ Summarise what committee members have said.
* Help find common ground between opposing views. θ Summarise what has happened at the end of a discussion, indicating clearly what decisions have been made and who is responsible for carrying them out.
* Clarify what members are voting on and casting a vote in the event of a tie.

1. Rules

The meetings you chair throughout the year will range from formal to informal. Your constitution will probably contain a set of standing orders or meeting regulations for larger meetings. If you use them, it is important that you have read them. You must understand how they should be used. The time to use these rules is when you think there may be a conflict - if there is a great deal of business to get through in a short space of time, or when the meeting is large.

**REMEMBER:**

* Chairing is pivotal to the success of a meeting.
* A good chair is someone who allows people to contribute, ensures everyone understands the discussion and gets a decision 70 71 made within the time available.
* A chair should understand the constitution and rules relating to the meeting. As chair you should stay positive as much as you can. Negativity will only lead to negative results. You should also encourage the committee to think outside the box, to aim for the stars and to consider different options.

HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR MEETINGS

Your constitution will probably tell you how many committee or executive meetings you will have to organise and when. For most Clubs/Socs it’s up to the secretary, or another committee member responsible for meetings, to co-ordinate their organisation and preparation. Good organisation is absolutely vital. A badly organised meeting can be a waste of time and can lead to poor decisions. It is frustrating for those who want to take part in the meeting.

**Here are some tips: Easier decision-making:**

**Clear meeting agenda**

**Well conducted meeting**

**Previous decisions have been followed up and acted upon.**

WHY HAVE A MEETING

The reason for having the meeting depends on what you hope to achieve. What would happen if the meeting did not take place? Meetings serve a whole range of different purposes:

* To make decisions on the day-to-day operation of your Club in line with current policy
* To communicate with people
* To exchange ideas and to pool experience
* To keep people fully informed
* To identify problems that need to be resolved

PLANNING THE MEETING

Plan an agenda so that committee members can come to the meeting prepared. Your committee should e-mail you items. Set a deadline for items to be submitted. Once you know what items are to be discussed, work out what background information is needed. Don’t forget to include the format, location and time/date of the meeting.

MINUTES

Minutes are the key points made during a meeting. Keep minutes of all your meetings safe. They provide a written record and prove that the meeting took place. Minutes should be written in a consistent style from one meeting to the next. It is useful to have only one person responsible for minute taking rather than sharing the duty. Completed Minutes to be uploaded onto your Committee page on MSULife.

Minutes of the last meeting:

You will need to agree minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting. As chair, ask the members of the meeting if there are any inaccuracies in the minutes. Once approved, discussion of these items should not be reopened.

Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting: This is where questions/requests for further information can be raised about items discussed at the last meeting and recorded in the minutes, which are not scheduled for later on in the agenda.

Committee Reports: This provides an opportunity for committee members to give a report on the work they done since the last meeting.

Any other business: If “Other business” tends to go on too long it may indicate that not enough planning has gone into the meeting and the participants are thinking on their feet. Date of the next meeting: Always remind people of (or agree) the date of the next meeting