MANAGINGMEETINGS

**PREPARING FOR THE MEETING**

**General Questions to ask yourself**:

1. Do I know what I am hoping for from this meeting – objectives?

2. Have any papers – including the minutes of the last meeting – which give information that members need beforehand been prepared and distributed?

3. Does anything need to be done (by me or others) to help people look forward to the meeting and come ready to engage with the task?

4. Are there any dangers I need to guard against in talking to people before the meeting?

5. Are there any individuals I need to help to be ready for the meeting? How shall I do this? (For newcomers, see below)

6. Are there any people who are regularly absent or late to whom I need to speak?

7. Am I clear about the timing of each item and the whole meeting?

8. Have any people whose specific in-put is required been invited and briefed about those who will be present, the purpose of the meeting, their presentation time, and their role at the meeting?

9. If I am responsible for introducing any item: a. Have I got all the information I need? b. Do I know how I am going to present it? c. Am I aware of the areas, if any, which will need discussion? d. Have I prepared to help people to express their views/opinions? e. Have I prepared to help people arrive at a decision all can own?

**PREPARING THE AGENDA**

1. Who draws up the agenda?

2. Is it a standard agenda or does it need to be tailored to this meeting?

3. Shall I accept AOB items or try to ensure all matters members want to discuss are on the agenda before the meeting?

4. It is clear why each item is on the agenda – information, discussion, decision? Am I clear why each item is on the agenda and what choices are to be made about it? Have I got all the information I need?

5. Is there sufficient information, explanation, and reference to any relevant papers under each item?

6. Is the expected timing of each item clear?

**TIMING**

1. Will you start on time even if some are not present? How will you welcome latecomers?

2. What is the best time of day/best day of the week for the people who come to this meeting or who might come to this meeting to meet?

3. Are there any child-care issues for those who come or might come?

4. How long should the meeting be?

5. Try to ensure that each item has sufficient time but is not allowed to ‘drag on’.

**VENUE** Looking around at the room we are in:

1. Is the atmosphere, size, décor, furnishing suited to our meeting?

2. Does the seating arrangement help to make the meeting effective? Are the seats of the right kind?

3. Is the use of tables helpful?

4. Are we looking in the right direction? Is the background distracting?

5. Have we got everything we need? Apply these points to your own setting for a Church Council or other meeting

**NEW MEMBERS/NEW CHURCH COUNCIL**

1. If possible, discuss with the existing group how they will welcome new members. How did they feel when new? How might newcomers feel?

2. What do new members need to know about the existing group, how it works, what the issues are, what its purpose is? How will they be informed?

3. Are there any documents it would be helpful for them to have?

4. Would it help them if you brought them together or contacted them informally before their first meeting so that they can ask any questions and be briefed?

5. When a new Church Council is formed (eg at the beginning of the connexional year or after elections), consider bringing all together to get to know each other, explain their roles, tell their stories, share their hopes for the coming year.

**MEMBERS WHO DON’T PARTICIPATE**

1. At the beginning of the meeting stress the value of each person’s (unique) contribution.

2. Listen carefully to everything that’s said and show you value each contribution (however slight it may seem); encourage others to do the same.

3. Ask questions which encourage people to respond – ‘Anyone want to add anything?’ ‘Does anyone who’s not yet spoken want to say something?’ But don’t put them on the spot - ‘John, what do you think about this?’

4. Watch for body language indicating someone is thinking and might like to contribute.

5. Try to catch their eye, silently inviting them to contribute.

6. Make time for people to jot down their own ideas before inviting discussion

7. Use buzz-groups or sub-groups to encourage people to put their thoughts into words 8. If you know the people well enough to know what they would like to say, encourage them to do so without embarrassing them.

**DOMINANT MEMBERS**

1. Re-assure him/her s/he’s been heard, indicating that the contributions of others are important.

2. Acknowledge their contributions – ‘You’ve made several very important points’.

3. Encourage others to think for themselves and participate, inviting them to consider the dominant person’s point.

4. Avoid getting annoyed!

5. Talk with the person outside the meeting, encouraging him/her to see that it’s important to let others speak and hear their contribution. 6. Encourage quieter people to speak.

**WORKING FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

1. Ask those who are taking a particular position to explain to the others who don’t agree and then reverse.

2. Get people to put into words the point of view they don’t agree with.

3. Encourage people to put into words the essential core of what they want (‘I have a problem with sitting in a draft because of a stiff neck’ rather than ‘shut that window’)

4. Put people into groups with those they agree with or those they disagree with and encourage them to work out a solution which might be acceptable to all.

5. Try to identify common ground so that people can see what they do agree on, and then work at remaining differences. Encourage people to see the bigger picture

Material based on MEETINGS THAT WORK: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TEAMWORKING IN GROUPS by Catherine Widdicombe - an invaluable book for anyone leading meetings. Published by The Lutterworth Press 2002, 2013.