Guidelines for chairing meetings

**OPENING**

* make sure people know one another
* Start the meeting on time or as soon as you have a quorum and ask people to help keep it to time
* Briefly go over the agenda
* Ask for any other items that people might want to put on the agenda (general business)
* Remind people of the importance of confidentiality, and declaring conflicts of interest if any
* Clarify any rules and the purpose of the meeting.

DURING THE MEETING

* Follow the agenda and keep discussion to the issue being dealt with
* If you have any important items to discuss or decide make sure you allow enough time in the meeting to do so
* On matters requiring decisions at the meeting, remind people if necessary, that a decision is an expected outcome of the meeting
* Don’t assume everyone understands or has sufficient knowledge
* Actively listen and acknowledge speakers by name and with appropriate gestures, summarising their position when necessary
* Limit other business added at the end of the meeting
* For any confidential items the chair may ask non-committee members to leave the meeting for that discussion
* Finish the meeting on time, unless agreed to by the members.

MAKING DECISIONS

* Keep the issue as clear as possible
* Be objective and impartial
* Provide any necessary background or reasons why a decision needs to be made
* Ensure that each person is given the opportunity to have their say on each point
* Make sure everyone has enough information
* Summarise the discussion before a final decision is called for
* Where possible, reach agreement on actions or decisions by consensus.
* Clarify how the decision will be made, such as informal/formal vote, authorisation to someone/subcommittee to make the decision following the meeting
* For important decisions, ‘thinking time’ between meetings can sometimes be useful – it is important to be clear about when the decision will be made whether any work needs to be done between meetings and who will do it.

At the end of each agenda item, make sure that if a decision is required, the wording of the decision is clear and is understood by all, make the decision, then ensure the results are clear. If a decision requires action, ensure someone is nominated to undertake the action and that it is recorded in the minutes.

For important decisions, ask the Secretary/minute taker to read out the relevant section in the minutes for the committee’s agreement.

AFTER THE MEETING

* Evaluate the meeting – preferably with someone who attend. Use this to help you plan the next meeting
* Ensure minutes and action items are prepared and signed and distributed to all committee members within a reasonable time after the conclusion of the meeting.