

# ROTHERHAM FEDERATION

# SECRETARYS HANDBOOK

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Arranging meetings
- Preparing an Agenda
- Taking minutes
- Dealing with correspondence

## ARRANGING MEETINGS

Community meetings usually fall into two types, Committee Meetings & Public (or Open) Meetings. It is the responsibility of the secretary to book a suitable meeting place and to inform other members about the meeting.

For Committee Meetings the secretary will need to let the other committee members know the place, date & time of the meeting. This can be done either personally, by letter, phone, text or email.

For Public Meetings or Open Meetings everyone who is a member of the group (as listed in the rules) needs to be informed of the place, date & time of the meeting and the reason for the meeting. It could be that there are invited guests who will be speaking at the meeting or there could be an issue of concern which will be up for discussion at the meeting. One way to ensure that everyone knows about the meeting is to distribute a leaflet to every household in the group area or to post it on a group social media page.

If there are invited speakers it is the responsibility of the secretary to confirm that they will be at the meeting and to ask if they have any special requirements (e.g. flipchart, overhead projector)

Remember to try, where possible, to book a meeting place which is accessible to anyone with mobility problems and offer transport to and from the meeting if needed. Check if anyone has any other special needs which you may be able to help with (e.g. poor eyesight, hard of hearing).

## PREPARING AN AGENDA

The best way to ensure that meetings run efficiently and smoothly is to have an agenda and to stick to it.

It is the job of the Secretary, together with the Chair of the group, to prepare an agenda before the meeting and to make sure that everyone at the meeting is given a copy. You may need to have the agenda translated into appropriate languages and you may also need to offer help to other group members who, because of their special needs, may have difficulty following the agenda.

On the next few pages are guides to drawing up basic agendas. Agendas will change according to what business needs to be dealt with and whether the meeting is a committee meeting or a public meeting.

## EXAMPLES OF AN AGENDA

### Committee Meeting Agenda

<b>Meeting of *GROUP NAME*</b>	
<b>To be held on *DATE* at *TIME*</b>	
<b>at *VENUE*</b>	
1.	Welcome & Introductions
2.	Apologies for absence
3.	Minutes of the last committee meeting
4.	Matters arising from minutes
5.	Treasurer's report
6.	Correspondence
7.	Any Special items, guest speakers
8.	Reports from outside the meeting
9.	Any other business
10.	Date, time & place of next meeting

### Public Meeting Agenda

<b>Meeting of *GROUP NAME*</b>	
<b>To be held on *DATE* at *TIME*</b>	
<b>at *VENUE*</b>	
1.	Welcome & Introductions
2.	Apologies for absence
3.	Correspondence
4.	Group update
5.	Main speaker or items for discussion
6.	Question time
7.	Any other business

Try not to get the two different types of meeting mixed up. Members who have turned up to a Public Meeting to listen to a particular speaker or to take part in discussions on a special subject may get put off by having to go through lots of committee business. A brief update on what the group committee has been doing will usually be enough information for most people. If anyone wants more detail then they can read through previous minutes or be invited along to the next committee meeting.

Some groups decide to have all their meetings open to everyone so that anyone in their group can go along to Committee Meetings even if they are not an elected Committee Member.

## TAKING MINUTES

### TAKING MINUTES – COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Taking minutes of a Committee Meeting is normally the job of the group Secretary, who is responsible for taking notes at the meeting, writing up the minutes and distributing them. Minutes can either be

written up in a Minute Book, which is then available to everyone who is a member of the group to read or typed up and distributed to committee members, with the Secretary keeping a master copy on file.

If a full agenda has been prepared for a Committee Meeting, and the Chair of the group ensures that committee members stick to the agenda, then taking minutes of the meeting becomes much easier.

There is no need to write down word for word what is said at a meeting. It is only the essentials that need to be written down, following the same headings as the agenda.

- 1.Date & time of meeting
- 2.Who was present at the meeting
- 3.Who sent in their apologies for absence
- 4.Who accepted the minutes of the last meeting as a true record
- 5.What were the matters arising from the minutes
- 6.Brief details of the Treasurer's Report
- 7.What correspondence was received and who was responsible for dealing with it
- 8.Brief details of guest speakers, special items
- 9.Brief reports from outside meetings
- 10.Brief details of any other business
- 11.Date and time of next meeting

Try including an action column so you know who has agreed to do what

## **TAKING MINUTES – PUBLIC (OPEN) MEETINGS**

Taking minutes at a Public or Open Meeting is also the responsibility of the group Secretary. Once again, this job will be made much easier if there is a prepared agenda for the meeting and copies are given to everyone who attends.

If a lot of people attend the meeting it is often much easier to pass around of piece of paper and ask everyone to sign their name, rather than the secretary try to record everyone who was present.

If there is a special guest speaker invited to the meeting, then the minutes could take the form of a report which gives brief details of what issues were addressed by the speaker and what the speaker had to say. For example, if the group has invited someone along from the Police to talk about concerns over apparent rising crime, then there may be facts and figures to record and also details about how the Police were intending to address the particular concerns of the area. It is also worth recording any questions which were asked and what answers were received.

Always remember that whatever kind of meeting is held by your group no one should mention any specific names or addresses or pass on any personal information about anyone else in public. Individual problems should be dealt with in private by the service or agency concerned. Anyone who brings up individual problems at a group meeting should be immediately challenged and asked to wait until the meeting is over to have their concerns dealt with. Under no circumstances should a secretary of a group record any information which relates to an individual person or address.

## **DEALING WITH CORRESPONDENCE**

### **INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE (EMAILS, PHONE CALLS ETC)**

As the Secretary of a group, you will soon find that you will receive post, mainly from RotherFed, or RMBC, and keeping track of correspondence is an important part of a Secretary's job.

Incoming post will usually fall into two broad categories:

1. Correspondence which can be kept to one side and brought up at the next group Committee Meeting. Having a file especially for such correspondence is a good idea and will prevent things going astray. When the 'correspondence' item on the committee meeting agenda is reached the letters, notices, etc. from this file can be read out and dealt with during the meeting.
2. Correspondence which needs to be dealt with before the next planned Committee Meeting. This may be things such as the notification of a meeting or seminar with a closing date for bookings which is before the next scheduled committee meetings. In these circumstances it is up to the Secretary to contact the appropriate committee members and reply to the correspondence on their behalf or ensure that someone else will deal with the matter in good time.

### **OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE**

It is the responsibility of the Secretary to ensure that all letters, questionnaires, booking forms etc. are dealt with and replies sent out when appropriate. When correspondence is brought to a Committee Meeting then the Secretary should make a note of what is said at the committee meeting and reply to the correspondence as decided by the committee members. Most groups use letter headed paper and it always looks much more professional if this is used for group correspondence.