

Meeting Etiquette

A meeting is as successful as the positive contributions of its members.

There are various ways members can contribute in a meeting, formally as chair or vice chair and informally through speaking, summarising or asking questions to clarify what has just been said.

There is a plethora of published research and guidance in respect of meeting etiquette, below is an analysis of the key aspects:

- When invited to a meeting please notify the organiser if you intend to attend or not
- Arrive on time
- Meetings are for the benefit of all and no one person has the right to dominate or be disruptive. People should be addressed courteously and should feel comfortable enough to make their contributions.
- Whilst the Chair is finally responsible for managing the meeting, it is everyone's responsibility to make the Chair's job as smooth as possible for the good of all. The Chair will aim to ensure that meeting times and agenda items are managed well so that everything can run to time. They also need to manage contributions, keep contributors from repeating themselves, and ensure a few individuals do not monopolise the time. This will ensure that equality and courtesy are maintained.
- Anyone who attends meetings, (whether public or private) should be aware of other people's right to be treated with courtesy. Nobody should feel bullied or insulted or be verbally attacked by another member. Should one member disagree with another, then there is a professional and courteous way to disagree.
- Those wishing to speak should signal their intention to the chair and wait to be invited to speak. Before speaking, members should construct the points to be made and stick to them, speaking for as short a time as possible without repetition whilst using clear, acceptable language.
- When asking questions, be succinct and clear. Ask only one question at a time; others may have questions as well.
- Listen to the issues the speaker addresses, the questions from the other members and the answers provided.
- The Chair has a duty to outlaw disruptive practices, first by warning offenders and then, should behaviour persist, by asking the meeting if they are happy for the Chair to ask the offender to leave. This would always be a last resort.
- Someone giving feedback on behalf of a group should first check with others in that group that the summary is an accurate reflection of what was said.
- After the meeting respond to action items as expeditiously as possible.

The gov.uk website provides the following 'Handy Hints' for those attending business meetings:

Ask yourself 'Have I.....'

- Read the minutes
- Checked the agenda
- Made notes on what I want to say
- Got written responses to anything I've been asked to reply to
- Arranged to be there for the whole meeting

Tell yourself 'I will.....'

- Really listen to what people say
- Leave my own problems at the door
- Compliment the work of at least one member
- Make my criticisms constructively
- Make at least one well prepared contribution
- Enjoy myself

A productive successful meeting can be defined as one where all members show courtesy and respect.