

## GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Good communications are fundamental to the smooth operation of any organisation. The following guidelines are offered to everyone involved in the organisation of orienteering as examples of 'Best Practice' that can be followed at all levels.

### • Meetings

A meeting is a gathering of people assembled for a **definite purpose** and a **communication tool**. Meetings and discussions can be used to communicate and to involve people. Those involved in decision-making meetings tend to have a greater understanding and commitment to the decisions taken. Effective meetings need good Chairmanship and good discussion leadership. Such skills develop with experience. However, there are some basic rules that can help to improve the quality of meetings. The following six P's of Meetings and Discussions should lead to **shorter** and more **productive** meetings:

#### 1. PLANNING

- Is there a clear objective for the meeting?
- Both Chairman and Participants should know the purpose of each part of the meeting. Is it for:
  - Information giving
  - Information giving and/or sharing
  - Persuading and/or Negotiating
  - Problem Solving and/or Decision Making
- What about substitutes? - **Will they be properly briefed and report back in full?**
- Will the meeting be of the right size?
- What about the venue, facilities, and timing?

#### 2. PRE-NOTIFICATION

- All those due to attend the meeting should receive adequate **WRITTEN NOTICE** of:
  - date, time, place, and expected duration
  - purpose, items, needs, and expectations
  - terms of reference
  - detailed agenda with appropriate back-up information, papers etc. to allow informed discussion

#### 3. PREPARATION

- The Chairman needs to be thoroughly briefed:
  - ensuring that he has all relevant information
  - preparing his own agenda
  - arranging items in the most logical sequence
  - **setting target times for each item and the overall meeting**
- The Chairman should see that the venue and facilities are properly arranged e.g. seating, layout etc.
- The need for a minute taker should be considered.

#### 4. PROCESS

- In conducting the meeting the Chairman should:
  - start by reminding members the purpose of the meeting
  - introduce each item, state the objective and guide the discussion in a logical order:
    - EVIDENCE - what are the facts?
    - INTERPRETATION - what do they mean?
    - ACTION - what should be done and by whom?
- Set clear priorities and keep discussion to specifics
- Encourage everyone to participate in a positive way
- Ensure that everyone has confidence in the Chairman's fairness by according equal status to all members
- When necessary, stimulate discussion, clear up misunderstandings, co-ordinate views, provide information, AND summarise the points of discussion with the appropriate actions to be taken
- Chairpersons should remember to be active listeners

#### 5. PARTICIPATION

The success of a meeting depends upon the behaviour of all present. Members who observe the following code assist everyone:

- CONTRIBUTION - Join discussion, put forward constructive ideas, **prepare for the meeting**
- CONCENTRATION - Maintain interest in all topics, **listen actively**
- CONTROL - Emotions and antagonisms, never descends to personalities
- CO-OPERATE - **Accepting decisions when in the minority, Behaving in a manner that positively helps in decision making and problem solving**
- CONVEY - **Ensure full feedback to those they represent even in absence of minutes**

#### 6. PUT IT ON THE RECORD

- The Chairman should:
  - **summarise decisions taken as the meeting progresses** and before the meeting ends
  - **ensure that it is quite clear what has been decided** and how the consequent action will follow
  - have circulated, **as soon as possible after the meeting**, clear minutes containing the list of **decisions taken, the actions to follow and by whom**
  - communicate decisions of the meeting to all relevant people. People who NEED to know or people who would find it USEFUL to be informed including Members through website
  - as appropriate inform people of the date, time, purpose, and place of the next meeting

#### • Action Minutes

- Produce Action Minutes of all meetings within 2 working days
- Keep to bullet points
- Give the decisions made and those responsible for 'actioning' them
- State by when they are to be accomplished
- Be clear on the anticipated inputs to the next meeting
- Post the minutes on the BOF website as unadopted until ratified

#### • Representatives & Communications

- Produce a Guideline for Representatives attending meetings to cover their responsibilities in communicating the views of those they represent and in reporting back to them the outcome of the meeting.
- Ensure that ALL Representatives are fully briefed upon their roles and responsibilities.
- Encourage Clubs to appoint a BOF Web contact who can pass on information to Club Members who do not have internet facilities.