

Running Effective Committee Meetings

Tips for CIBSE Network committees to have productive meetings



Purpose of the meeting

- 01 It helps to have a clear purpose for the meeting. This is communicated to committee members via the agenda.
- 02 Clear agendas show whether the meeting's main purpose is:
 - Decision-making
 - Reporting and accountability
 - Review
 - Problem-solving
 - Discussion
- 03 The purpose of the meeting also indicates who the “key” members are.

Identify the “key” members

- 01** With a clear purpose, it becomes easier to identify who the “key” members are. These are the committee members that will report items, impact decisions, and contribute to discussions.
- 02** Identifying these “key” members will help you narrow down who needs to be in attendance and therefore who to prioritise when scheduling the meeting date.
- 03** This does not mean that only these people should be invited, as all members of the committee should be encouraged to participate. It simply helps to schedule the meeting at a time when these members will be able to attend, setting your meeting up for success. This is particularly helpful for committees that are larger than 10 people.



Identify the productivity blockers

- 01 Meetings can become ineffective if any of the following issues are present:
 - Long discussions with no decision
 - Decision-making on the basis of incomplete information
 - Low attendance
 - Uneven participation
 - Unwillingness to ask questions
- 02 Identifying what issues are preventing productivity in your committee meeting can to help address them



Resolving long discussions with no decision

- 01** If your committee meeting turns into a long discussion that does not produce a decision, try the following tips:
- 02** Gently steer the conversation back to the main agenda by summarizing the key points discussed so far. This can help refocus the group and clarify the next steps needed.
- 03** Propose forming a smaller subcommittee to delve deeper into particularly complex issues. This can help streamline the larger meeting and allow for more detailed analysis and decision-making in a more focused setting.
- 04** Don't hesitate to ask for a short break if the meeting is becoming too lengthy. A brief pause can refresh everyone's minds and lead to more productive and decisive discussions when you reconvene.



Resolving decision-making on the basis of incomplete information

- 01** To resolve decision-making on the basis of incomplete information in a committee meeting, you should consider employing techniques such as brainstorming, Delphi method, or scenario planning.
- 02** Encourage open dialogue among committee members to gather diverse perspectives and insights. Assign roles like a devil's advocate to challenge assumptions and ensure all angles are explored.
- 03** Utilize decision matrices or weighted scoring models to objectively evaluate options based on available data.
- 04** Lastly, establish a protocol for follow-up, where decisions can be revisited as new information emerges, ensuring the committee remains adaptable and responsive to change.



Resolving low attendance

- 01** To resolve low attendance at committee meetings, try to send placeholders in advance, providing members with a clear agenda and the topics to be discussed. This helps them better prepare and understand the importance of their participation.
- 02** Additionally, consider varying the meeting times to accommodate different schedules, and utilise virtual meeting options for those who cannot attend in person.
- 03** Engaging members with interactive discussions and making meetings more concise and focused can also boost attendance.
- 04** Publicly acknowledging and appreciating members' contributions will foster a sense of value and commitment, encouraging more consistent involvement.

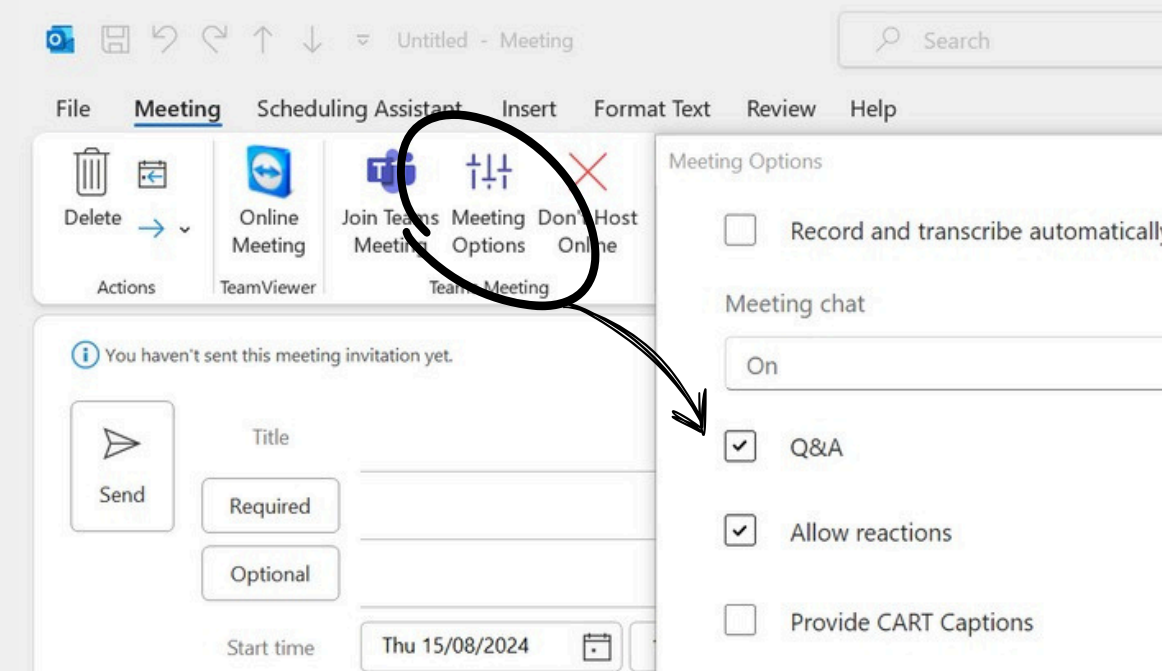
Resolving uneven participation

- 01** To resolve uneven participation, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the committee can implement structured turn-taking during discussions to ensure everyone has a chance to speak.
- 02** Additionally, assigning specific roles or tasks to quieter members can help them feel more engaged and responsible for contributing.
- 03** Encourage regular feedback to address any concerns about participation and to brainstorm new ways to foster a welcoming environment with the committee members.
- 04** By creating a supportive and equitable environment, Chairs and Vice-Chairs can help ensure that every voice is heard and valued.



Resolving an unwillingness to ask questions

- 01** To resolve an unwillingness to ask questions in committee meetings, members can implement a system where members can submit questions anonymously to help alleviate the fear of judgment. This can be done by enabling a Q&A for Teams Meetings in the Meeting Options.



- 02** Another way is encouraging the Officers to model openness by asking their own questions and admitting when they do not know something can make others feel more comfortable doing the same.
- 03** Additionally, setting aside specific times during the meeting dedicated solely to questions can signal to members that their inquiries are appreciated.



The Officers' role before a meeting

- 01** The Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary are highly influential to the success of the committee meeting.
- 02** Chairs, and Vice-Chairs, should:
 - plan the agenda with the Officers, including items brought by other members, and decide the order and timing of the agenda.
 - identify which agenda items are for information, discussion, or a decision
 - be well briefed about each item, and actions taken since the last meeting
 - ensure all necessary background papers (including the last meeting's minutes) are sent out with the agenda beforehand

The Chair & Vice-Chair's role during a meeting

01 The Chairs, and Vice-Chairs, should:

- ensure quorum is present
- welcome any new members
- receive apologies for absence
- check for conflicts of interest on the items on the agenda
- ensure that additions or amendments to minutes are recorded
- state the objectives of the meeting and each agenda item
- ensure all members have had a chance to speak
- summarise discussion made
- ensure that if jargon and abbreviations are used, all present understand them
- ensure that decisions are recorded, together with who is going to implement them
- steer members to work collaboratively and constructively as a team

The Secretary's role during a meeting

01 The Secretary should:

- ensure quorum is present
- take note of any actions, their deadlines, and who will be completing them
- advise on any governance related to the network
- confirm schedule for future meetings, requesting all necessary materials are prepared for distribution in advance
- ensure all members have had a chance to speak

The Treasurer's role during a meeting

01 The Treasurer should:

- ensure quorum is present
- report on the status of the network's finances
- identify any upcoming expenditure
- advise on whether sponsorship is appropriate
- oversee the budget and ensure funds are allocated effectively
- ensure all members have had a chance to speak





The member's role during a meeting

01 Elected and Co-opted members should:

- join in and lead activities
- ask questions and seek clarification
- put items on the agenda for future meetings
- work towards the collective goals of the network committee
- support and mentor new members
- ensure all members have had a chance to speak





Inducting new members

- 01** New members may feel intimidated at their first committee meeting. It is crucial to create an environment where they feel their opinions are welcomed and appreciated by the rest of the committee.
- 02** Assigning a “buddy” that can provide context to discussion, such as who is speaking, and previous decisions on a topic can help give them relevant background information without disrupting the flow of the meeting.
- 03** New members should also be provided with governing documents and previous meeting minutes ahead of their first committee meeting.
- 04** The Chair, or Vice-Chair, should make a point to ask their opinion after asking other members to ensure they feel included in the conversation.
- 05** The committee may want to ensure there is sufficient time before and/or after the meeting to allow the new member to have an informal conversation with the existing members to introduce themselves.





Do you have any questions?

Email groups@cibse.org or regions@cibse.org to talk to a member of the CIBSE Networks and Engagement Team

