

ASSOCIATION OF IRISH RIDING CLUBS CLUB COMMITTEE MEETINGS PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES



Committee meetings are necessary to ensure that the business in a club is carried out effectively and in a democratic fashion. The procedures outlined below, may be used as a guide as to how a club should operate.

The Chairman

It is the duty of the chairman to call and set the agenda for the meeting. During the meeting the Chairman will lead or chair the discussion. S/He will do this by opening the discussion; ensuring everyone gets a hearing; ensuring that the agenda is followed; ensuring that topics are fully discussed and decisions reached as required; and finally closing the meeting.

Chairing a Meeting

The Chairman by virtue of his/her office takes precedence over all others at a meeting. At big meetings and sometimes in committee he/she should stand to address members. This helps control as the mere fact of the Chairman rising to his/her feet should enforce silence. All questions, comments etc. should be made 'through the Chair'.

The Chairman's ruling on all matters of procedure is final. Very occasionally a situation may arise when the great majority would disagree with his/her ruling and wish to have the matter discussed. The way to do this is for members to move and second "That the meeting has no confidence in the Chairman". The Secretary then takes over and puts the motion to the meeting. If carried, the Chairperson must leave the chair. The meeting will then close or the members will elect another Chairperson to complete business. The motion operates for one meeting only.

The Club Secretary

It is the Secretary's duty to notify the committee members of meetings. There should always be a written agenda for a meeting and a copy should be made available for every member who will be attending the meeting. During the meeting, the Club Secretary will record the meeting minutes. (see below)

The Date & Time

Clubs should hold meetings on a regular basis, even at times when it appears there is little to do. It helps to specify a night and time such as the first Tuesday of each month at 8:30pm.

The Agenda

An agenda should be set and given to all members of the committee in advance on the meeting. The purpose of the agenda is to plan part of the meeting, inform the committee members of the scope of the topics to be covered and helps each member to prepare so that each will have the necessary information and documentation for discussion.

A good agenda will help towards an open discussion and should result in a fair decision making process. A good agenda will include:

- Items capable of being dealt with in the time allocated.

- Each item should be explained so that the members know exactly what is meant.
- No one or two-word items.
- Each item should have only one interpretation.
- It should be clear from the wording whether members are to get information on the topic, are expected to give information on the topic, whether members are to discuss the topic, or if a decision is to be reached on the topic.
- Matters on the agenda should be in order of priority, urgent matters first and the remainder in order of importance.
- Allowing for urgency and importance, matters on the agenda should have a logical sequence.
- Documents and information relevant to each matter on the agenda should be made available to members or an indication of where these documents and/or information are to be found.
- An agenda for a meeting should be in the hands of members in good time before a meeting.

The agenda usually follows this format:

- Minutes of the previous meeting
- Matters arising
- Correspondence
- Items specified
- Any other business

The Quorum

It is usual to decide on a quorum for meetings, i.e. the minimum number of members who must be present before the meeting can begin. This is usually outlined in the clubs constitution.

It is usually not less than one-third of the total committee members or in the case of a very small committee, not less than three. A decision on this should be taken at the first meeting of the season if not defined in the Club Constitution. The quorum for a general or special meeting of a club is defined in the Club Constitution.

A valid meeting

A meeting is deemed to be valid if the meeting:

- Has been properly convened.
- Has been properly constituted.
- Has been properly held in accordance with the rules governing the meeting.

The Minutes

The minutes are the written records of the business conducted and decisions taken at a meeting. The Secretary is responsible for recording the minutes and these must include:

- The date and venue of the meeting
- Those present
- The main points in discussions held
- Any decisions taken.

The Secretary must always note the proposer and seconder of a motion put and the result of the subsequent vote taken.

At every meeting the first item on the agenda is that the minutes of the previous meeting are read, agreed to be true and accurate and signed and dated by the Chairman.

The item "Matters Arising" is intended to report on progress on minor matters. Matters of importance should form separate items on the agenda.

Motions

A motion is a proposal that something should be done or a subject proposed as a basis for discussion. It must be proposed and seconded before being discussed. If proposed but not seconded, it is dead and cannot be discussed.

Matters are, of course, often discussed without a motion but, if there is disagreement, the Chairperson should call for a formal motion. This helps to clarify the issue.

When a motion is proposed and seconded, it is open for discussion and cannot be withdrawn without the consent of the Proposer and Secunder. A motion may be amended. A slight alteration in wording to a motion need not be dealt with as a formal amendment if it is acceptable to the Proposer and Secunder.

A formal amendment must be proposed and seconded. It may add, delete or change words or phrases in a motion without being contrary to the original motion. A simple direct negative is not an amendment as those who are against a motion can speak and vote against it.

An amendment is voted upon first and if beaten, the original motion is then put. If the amendment is successful it then takes the place of the original motion and is put as a substantive motion. There can be more than one amendment and amendments themselves can be amended. This can be very confusing and it is better to try and incorporate suggestions into the motion or existing amendment with the consent of the proposers.

When the Chairman puts the motion or amendment to a vote, he/she should state it clearly so that members will know exactly what they are voting on so that the Secretary may get an accurate record for the Minutes.

Voting

There are two main methods of voting at meetings, by a show of hands or by secret ballot. On important matters or when a motion concerns a person whether present or not, a secret ballot should be preferred.

In all cases the Chairman has a vote like any other member. In addition he/she has a casting vote which may be used in the event of a tied vote. By tradition a casting vote is used to maintain a no change situation. However, when the vote is tied where a person is concerned (eg election of officer at an AGM), rather than use a casting vote to decide between two candidates, it is advisable to draw lots to determine the winner.