

# **A Mini-Guide to Taking Marvellous Minutes**

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## **Hints and Tips to Make Minute Taking Easier**



# What are Meeting Minutes?

Meeting minutes are notes that are recorded during a meeting. They highlight the key issues that are discussed, motions proposed or voted on, and actions agreed. The minutes of a meeting are there to provide an accurate record of what happened during the meeting.



## Why are Minutes Important?

Minutes are important because:

- *They are a record of the PCC's decisions and actions*
- *They are a reminder of who was given actions and tasks*
- *They are evidence of deadlines*
- *They are a benefit for people who are absent when decisions are made*



# General Guide

As a general guide, aim for no more than two pages of A4.

However, it is important that the minutes include accurate and clear wording for decisions, resolutions and action points.

All resolutions passed by the PCC should be recorded with the names of the proposer, seconder and voting figures. If action is to be taken make it clear who is responsible.



## 1. PREPARE BEFOREHAND

Read through the agenda before the meeting to check if there is anything on which you might need clarification.

Also check that you are aware if anyone attending the meeting will need additional support to access it. E.g. large print paperwork or a hearing loop.



## 2. LISTEN

It's far more important to listen and get an accurate overview and understanding of the discussion rather than writing verbatim notes.



## 3. BE ASSERTIVE



Clarify anything that you don't understand as soon as possible. It's perfectly ok to ask someone to repeat a point or explain it further. It's in everyone's interests that the minutes are accurate.

#### 4. USE A TEMPLATE

Find, or create, a template that works for you. Use it consistently so that you are familiar with it and feel confident using it. You can prefill it with standard headings if that helps.



#### 5. MEET WITH THE CHAIRPERSON IN ADVANCE



If it is possible to do this, it can make a huge difference to the smooth running of the meeting.

#### 6. TICK OFF ATTENDEES AS THEY ARRIVE

This is a small but very helpful thing – it saves time and ensures the accuracy of the attendee list.



#### 7. SIT NEXT TO THE CHAIRPERSON



This gives you the best chance of hearing everything, as all discussion is aimed towards the chairperson. It also makes it easier for you to get their attention during the meeting if you need to do so.

## **8. WRITE CLEAR, BRIEF NOTES THAT STATE THE FACTS**



Your job is to summarise the meeting. Notes do not need to be verbatim but must be clear. They need to record the discussions, outcomes & decisions, any agreed actions and who is going to do them.

Some people find it easiest to do this as bullet points, but it is up to you how you take your notes.

## **9. WRITE UP THE MINUTES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE MEETING**

It is easiest to write up the minutes whilst the meeting is fresh in your mind.



The minutes should be clear so that any reader, including those not present at the meeting, can understand easily what was discussed and the outcome.

As well as including a record of the meeting as identified above, remember to include the date, time & place of the meeting, the name of the group holding the meeting E.g. PCC or Standing Committee etc; who attended and any apologies for absence.

## **10. LAYOUT:**

The layout should look professional and make it easy for the reader to pick out the main points.

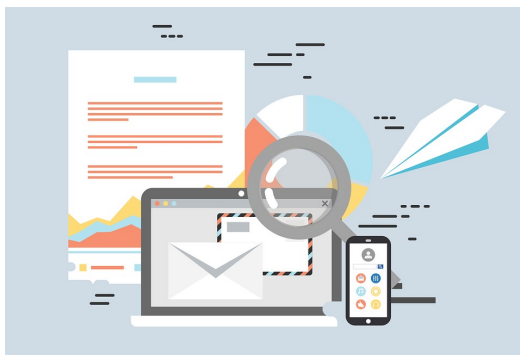
Have wide margins and plenty of space between items. Give each agenda item a clear header, and have headings and sub-headings in bold.

Use an easy-to-understand referencing system, numbered or bulleted points, etc.. Some people will find particular fonts and styles easier to read than others, so check with the group if they have preferences.

Remember that the approved minutes form the only legal record of the meeting

## **11. DISTRIBUTE MINUTES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE MEETING**

Once the minutes have been approved by the chair, distribute them as quickly as possible.



## **Confidentiality**

Where the PCC decides that a part of the meeting is confidential, you should minute those items separately, and clearly mark them as confidential.



## **Draft Minutes**

When the draft minutes are ready check them with the chairperson before they are circulated to other members. The minutes do not become an official record until they have been approved at the next meeting and it is always useful to bring your initial notes in case any items are disputed. It is important to maintain a complete set of minutes with accompanying papers.



## **Distribution of the Minutes**

You should circulate the draft minutes as soon as possible after the meeting (preferably within 2 weeks) to prompt those responsible for taking action.

At the latest, the minutes must be circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. Establish with the PCC which arrangements they prefer (if this has not been agreed already).

Copies of the minutes should be sent to each member of the PCC, and a copy of the minutes (but not the confidential part) must be available on request by any member of the Electoral Roll.

It is helpful to keep a file with the agenda and minutes (in date order).

Take the file to each meeting and ensure that the Chairperson signs the file copy of the minutes.

Minutes should be kept for 5 years after the last action. They must then be permanently deposited with the archivist.

It is recommended that a signed, hard copy of PCC minutes is kept in a minutes book that is kept in the church safe. Alternatively, a hard copy of the minutes should be kept in a lever arch file with a 12-part divider system (one per month) in a locked cupboard in church. (This is confidential information so must be kept in a safe place), or you may have a secure system at your church where you can keep electronic copies.

## A few other things ...

Minutes read better in a formal document when they are written in the active rather than the passive voice.

### Passive

The board was informed that...

Consideration was given to...

The financial report was presented by...

It was agreed that...

The motion was proposed by XXXX

### Active

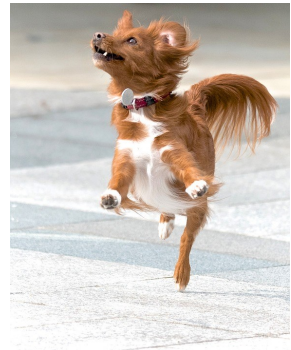
The chair informed the board that...

The board considered...

XXXX presented the financial report

The board agreed that...

XXXX proposed the motion



Words commonly used during meetings with some options for alternatives.

<b>WORD</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVES</b>		
<b>Agreed</b>	<i>Concurred</i>	<i>Acknowledged</i>	<i>Accepted</i>
<b>Explained</b>	<i>Clarified</i>	<i>Defined</i>	<i>Simplified</i>
<b>Suggested</b>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Recommended</i>	<i>Advised</i>
<b>Talked About</b>	<i>Debated</i>	<i>Considered</i>	<i>Discussed</i>
<b>Drew Attention To</b>	<i>Stressed</i>	<i>Highlighted</i>	<i>Emphasised</i>
<b>Disputed</b>	<i>Debated</i>	<i>Disagreed</i>	<i>Countered</i>
<b>Said</b>	<i>Stated</i>	<i>Remarked</i>	<i>Reported</i>
<b>Decided</b>	<i>Concluded</i>	<i>Determined</i>	<i>Approved</i>

