EXAMPLE GROUP

Running Effective Meetings

FOR EVERY BRANCH

A GUIDE FOR BRANCH ORGANISERS

Meetings that get things done.

How to plan, chair and follow up a meeting, in person or online, so people leave knowing what happens next and keep coming back.

Plan · Chair · Follow up

No meeting ends without actions.

PLAN · CHAIR · ACT

The one-page version.

Volunteers give us their evenings. A good meeting respects that time and turns talk into action. Five habits make the difference.

1

Know why you're meeting

Every meeting needs a clear purpose. If it could be a WhatsApp message, send the message instead.

2

Send the agenda in advance

Post it in the group with the MEETING label a few days before, so people come prepared.

3

Start and finish on time

An hour is plenty for most meetings. Respect people's evenings and they'll come back.

4

Chair, don't dominate

Keep to the agenda, bring everyone in and close each item with a decision.

5

Every decision becomes an action

Each action has one owner and a date. Send them round within 24 hours and check them next time.

Plan it properly.

02

PICK THE RIGHT KIND OF MEETING

Team meeting

FORTNIGHTLY · ABOUT AN HOUR

The heartbeat of the branch. Wins, updates, actions, the best new ideas, and a chance to meet new volunteers.

Project planning

AS NEEDED · SMALL GROUP

A few key people working out a project, an event or a fundraising drive. Decisions go back to the team.

Pre-session briefing

ON THE DAY · 10 MINUTES

A quick huddle before a collection, a leaflet drop or a stall. Who goes where, the key message and staying safe.

Social

EVERY SO OFTEN · NO AGENDA

A pint or a coffee. Teams that like each other work better together. Don't underestimate it.

YOUR CHECKLIST

- [ ] **Purpose agreed.** What should be decided by the end?
- [ ] **Venue booked.** Accessible, easy to reach, with parking or transport.
- [ ] **Agenda sent** a few days before, with any papers.
- [ ] **Last actions list ready** to review.
- [ ] **Invite sent to all members?** Put someone on the door with membership-system access.
- [ ] **Date and time pinned** in the WhatsApp group with the MEETING label.
- [ ] **Online link ready** for anyone joining remotely.
- [ ] **Roles agreed:** chair, note-taker and timekeeper.
- [ ] **New faces expected?** Line up someone to welcome them.
- [ ] **Room set up** and kit tested before people arrive.

A team meeting in 60 minutes.

Use this as your template. Put a time against every item and the most important business early, while people are fresh.

BRANCH TEAM MEETING · THURSDAY 7PM · VENUE AND ONLINE LINK IN THE PINNED MESSAGE

7.00	**Welcome**	5 min
	Introduce any new faces. Remind everyone of the finish time.	
7.05	**Share a win**	10 min
	A quick round: one good thing from the last fortnight. Starts on a high.	
7.15	**Actions from last time**	10 min
	Done, in progress or stuck? Owners report back briefly.	
7.25	**Main business**	20 min
	One or two items that need a decision: a project, an event, a fund-raiser.	
7.45	**Ideas**	10 min
	The best new ideas from the branch, briefly presented and discussed.	
7.55	**Actions and next meeting**	5 min
	Read back every action, owner and date. Confirm the next date.	

THREE RULES FOR A TIGHT AGENDA

Decisions, not discussion

Write each item as a question to answer, e.g. “Which area do we leaflet in May?”

Fewer items

Two items done well beat six done badly. Move the rest to WhatsApp or next time.

Any other business?

Ask for it in advance. Surprise items at the end eat time and rarely get decided.

Chairing well.

The chair's job is to get through the agenda, hear from everyone and leave with decisions. Not to do all the talking.

THREE ROLES, THREE PEOPLE

Chair

Runs the agenda, brings people in, sums up and confirms each decision.

Note-taker

Records decisions and actions only, not every word. Sends them out afterwards.

Timekeeper

Gives a two-minute warning on each item, so the chair can wrap up.

Bring everyone in

Invite quieter people by name. New volunteers often have the freshest ideas.

Use a parking list

Off-topic points go on a list to deal with later, so they're noted but don't derail you.

Close every item

Sum up what was agreed, who does it and by when, before you move on.

HANDY LINES FOR THE CHAIR

WHAT TO SAY

Getting back on track

“Good point. Let's park it and come back to it at the end.”

Bringing someone in

“Sarah, you were out on Saturday. How did it go?”

Someone dominating

“Thanks, John. Let's hear from someone we haven't heard from yet.”

Closing an item

“So we're agreed: Dave books the hall by Friday. Next item.”

Keep it positive

Same rules as the group chat: respectful, no swearing, on task, not doom or conspiracy.

When people join remotely.

Online meetings open the door to people who can't make the room. They need a bit more structure to work well.

CHOOSING A PLATFORM

PLATFORM	GOOD FOR	WATCH OUT FOR
WhatsApp video	Quick calls with a few people, and meeting new volunteers one to one.	Fiddly for a bigger meeting. No proper screen sharing on most phones.
Zoom	Full team meetings. Familiar to most people, works on phone or laptop.	Free plan: group meetings cut off at 40 minutes.
Google Meet	Team meetings. Runs in a web browser, nothing to install.	Free plan: group calls cut off at 60 minutes.

Free plan limits checked October 2026 and can change. Check before you rely on them, or ask the branch whether a paid account is available.

KEEPING REMOTE ATTENDEES ENGAGED

Remote people first

In each round, ask the people online before the room. They're easiest to forget.

Cameras on, if they can

Faces make it a team meeting, not a podcast. Never insist, though.

Watch the chat

Give someone in the room the job of reading out questions from the chat.

Sound matters most

In a hybrid room, use a speakerphone in the middle of the table, not a laptop at one end.

Test before you start

Open the link 10 minutes early. Check the camera, mic and Wi-Fi.

Keep it shorter

Screens are tiring. Aim for 45 minutes online, and break up long items.

Turn talk into action.

WITHIN 24 HOURS

Send the actions round in the WhatsApp group with the ACTION REQUIRED label.

Keep it short: what was decided, who's doing what, by when, and the date of the next meeting.

KEEP A SIMPLE ACTION LOG

ACTION	OWNER	DUE	STATUS
Book the church hall for the public meeting	Dave	Fri 16 Oct	Done
Leaflet rounds covered in the target area	Sarah	Sat 24 Oct	In progress
Draft a poster for the litter pick	Priya	Mon 19 Oct	Overdue

Example only. Review the log at the start of every meeting.

WHAT A GOOD ACTION LOOKS LIKE

Weak

- "We should do more leafleting."
- No owner, no date, no detail. Nothing will happen.

Strong

- "Sarah organises two leaflet rounds in the target area by Saturday 24th."
- One owner, a clear task and a date. Easy to check next time.

Notes are confidential

Internal data under our rules: keep them in the team, never share outside.

No personal details

Don't put members' names, addresses or views in meeting notes.

One home for notes

Keep them in one agreed, secure place so everyone can find them.

Bring newcomers back.

The team meeting is often where we first meet new volunteers. Their first meeting decides whether there's a second.

Invite gone to all members? Check membership at the door.

If the meeting invite went to every member in the area, you may see some faces for the very first time. At the start, have someone check each new person's membership number against the membership system to make sure they're legitimate. If it doesn't check out, politely explain the meeting is for members.

Greet them at the door

Someone they've spoken to in the holding group, if possible. A friendly face matters.

Introduce them

Name, where they live, what they'd like to help with. Thirty seconds, no pressure.

Have the chat

Before or after the meeting, not during it. See the Volunteer Vetting Guide.

Give them a first task

Something small and specific they can do before the next meeting.

MEETING HEALTH CHECK · ASK YOURSELF EVERY FEW MEETINGS

Did we start and finish on time?	Yes No
Did the agenda go out in advance?	Yes No
Did everyone get a chance to speak?	Yes No
Did every item end with a decision?	Yes No
Were the actions sent round within 24 hours?	Yes No
Are numbers at meetings holding up or growing?	Yes No