



## 8. COMMITTEE PROCEDURES & PRACTICES

Ray Burniston writes Part 8 in a series on Committees. This article is about the procedures of a committee.

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Any newly appointed secretary/manager should investigate what procedures and practices have been the usual norm at their new club. It pays to remember that every club will be different in some way and many have traditions, procedures and practices that have existed for countless numbers of years. Therefore be wary of imagining you can change everything in a matter of weeks on taking over. By all means spend time and investigate what has happened at the club in the past, look at the current operation and identify weaknesses in the system - and produce possible solutions to the problems.

Committees are a law unto themselves and what suits Club A will not necessarily suit, or be acceptable, at Club B. Reading back through the committee minutes over the past few years will generally give you an insight not only to what has gone on but how or what makes the club tick. You may find that certain members of the committee/board are very much in control and between them they more or less run the club. If this is the case you need to carefully try to ascertain why this is. In some instances it may be simply inertia by the rest of the committee/board and new blood is desperately needed to bring in new ideas and policies. On the other hand you may find those in control are doing a good job so be wary of trying to change things in this instance.

If the committee is chaired each year by the captain this can result in few long-term policies ever getting implemented. When I first started at one of my clubs as secretary I found that the agenda was printed out on a sheet and apart from the date nothing else changed. After attending two monthly meetings including during August, I found that often they would talk about a subject on the agenda although the sub-committee had not met and there was really nothing to discuss. The current chairman was not in favour of change. However a few months later the incoming captain who was to be chairman fully supported my reasons for changing the agenda and we never again reverted to the old one.

Day and time of committee/board meetings are often fixed. This enables new elected members to reserve these dates in their diaries and thus hopefully ensure good attendance. Beware of the newly elected member who wants to change the day and time to suit him. I always used to inform prospective committee members what the procedures were currently in place before they were elected and occasionally this resulted in someone withdrawing their nomination because they would not be able to make the meetings.

It is a good policy to have a list of Standing Rules for the committee. These would cover things like policy on: any other business; election of new members; voting procedures at meetings; constant non-attendance by a committee member; putting forward proposals; filling vacancies caused by resignations and so on. Many of them will be set out in the rules of the club but it is a good idea to have them included in a document you give to all new members of the committee. Some clubs will have a committee rule that no vote is ever taken on a proposition unless it has been specifically included in the agenda for the meeting. This prevents an item brought up under 'any other business' at the end of a meeting and a hasty vote taken. Any items brought up not on the agenda are either referred to the appropriate sub-committee or included on the agenda for the next meeting.

When a proposal is voted on by the meeting it is important to see that the chairman follows the correct procedure. This is especially important if it is likely to be a controversial one. At one club I visited I was told that on a major item it will record how each member voted and this is included in the minutes of the meeting. At this club the minutes are then exhibited on the club notice board following the next meeting after they have been approved. This way each member literally has to stand up and be counted.

When you consider that how each member voted is recorded in parliament and is available for every member of the public to see, it is not bad idea. I can recall a bad decision being taken on a matter some years ago at my club but afterwards it seemed that every member of the committee had voted against when you asked them about it. Having been a club member for the past thirteen years I have come round to the view that minutes of committee/board meetings should be available for inspection by members although possibly not on the notice board.

Whatever has gone on before your arrival at the club make certain you study carefully your ways of communicating to your committee/board meetings. Make improvements as you think fit after discussing points with the chairman.

## Check List

- ✉ The newly appointed secretary/manager should spend time during the first few months finding out the procedures and practices of the committee/board.
- ✉ Take time to discuss proposed changes with the Chairman, Captain and other Officers.
- ✉ See how the committee/board operates and try to identify faults in the system and ways of overcoming them.
- ✉ If there are no Standing Rules for committee/board in place suggest that you draft out a suitable set based on the Club Rules.
- ✉ Make sure that newly-elected members are given full details of what is expected of them.
- ✉ Good communication is an important part in the administration of committee/board and review procedures regularly to see if improvements can be made.

The newly-appointed secretary/manager can very quickly discover weaknesses in the past dealings with the committee/board. Sending out minutes and agendas in good time can improve considerably the administration. Over a period of time you can invariably exert your influence and make the necessary changes in procedures and practices, which would have been unacceptable when you first arrived.

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