

Managing Meetings and Committee Working

Ag Bainisitiú Cruinnithe agus ag Obair le Coistí

Although a sound committee structure is at the core of an efficient GAA club, committees are not an end in themselves. Committees are vital for a Club to operate, but they are there to serve the core business of the Club; playing our Gaelic games, and promoting our Gaelic culture. Meetings are an effective way to ensure cohesion within a Committee, but these must be well-planned and managed in order to serve their purpose.

The Club's Executive Committee must comprise of the following officer positions: Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Registrar, Officer for Irish and Culture, one Players' Representative, PRO, Childrens' Officer, and at least five other Full Members. Although other positions are required to cover all aspects of Club business, these need not necessarily sit on the Club's Executive Committee. Examples of these additional, and often essential elected positions are as follows: Development Officer, Insurance Officer, Coaching and Games Officer, and possibly a vice or assistant position to the secretary and treasurer positions. Since 2014 the Club ASAP Officer has been renamed the Club Health & Wellbeing Officer, to reflect the introduction of Health & Wellbeing committees at County Level. They should sit as a member of the Club Executive Committee. It is important to note that in order to meet child protection requirements clubs should also appoint a Designated Person to work alongside the Childrens' Officer, and each of these positions should have a deputy to assist them.

As is evident from the list of positions above, often a Club's Executive can become a large group. This need not necessarily be the case, and in fact often minimum numbers on the Executive Committee work best. The Executive Committee is required to meet at least once a quarter, although monthly meetings are recommended.

Sub-Committees

In order for all the work to be taken care of Clubs should carefully consider their sub-committee needs and their remit. Usually 4-5 sub-committees are suffice, and the chair of each sub-committee should sit as a member of the Executive Committee, reporting back on a monthly basis to update on progress made and issues needing attention. It is important that the sub-committee fully understands its remit, and duplication across sub-committees is avoided. Although not exhaustive nor descriptive, a list of typical sub-committees are as follows:

- Finance and Development
- Culture and Language
- Health and Wellbeing
- Coaching and Games
- Youth and Duty of Care

Sub-committees, when operating correctly, allow volunteers with certain skills or interests to work on topics which best suit them. Sub-committees avoid the need for club officers with little involvement in certain tasks being involved in roles which are not relevant to them. Sub-committees don't tell the Executive Committee what to do but seek the approval of the Executive Committee when necessary.

No matter how the tasks are divvied-up meetings are a normal part of GAA voluntary life. Meetings, when conducted correctly, are an excellent forum in which to inform, raise issues, debate, feed-back, make decisions, and conduct GAA business. However, too often our meetings are poorly-run; badly-timed; achieve little and are off-putting to those involved. Meetings should be well-managed and in order to do this a little preparation goes a long way. Below are a few tips on holding successful meetings.

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Before the Meeting:

- Ensure everyone knows the meeting is on including date, time and venue. Try to schedule meetings on a monthly basis so people can plan around them. For example, the first Monday of every month etc.
- Have a clár for each meeting with agreed items featuring on it for discussion
- If there's a major issue to discuss provide a written summary of it for Committee members
- Apologies should be sent to the Secretary in advance of the meeting
- Don't allow private conversations, or "meetings within meetings"
- Finish the meeting before the stated finish time if all items have been covered
- At the end of the meeting summarise the main discussion points and actions to be taken
- Close with a cup of tea – don't forget the social aspect of the GAA
- Try to incorporate Irish phrases into the meeting; even if it's just a few words to open and close the meeting

During the Meeting:

- Start on time
- Welcome everyone and thank them for coming
- State a finish time and stick to it
- Some clubs have it as a matter of policy that no meeting lasts more than a set duration e.g no more than an hour
- Arrange the clár so that the most important items are discussed first and in full.
- Follow-up on things that were to be done from the previous meeting
- Make sure that all business is covered and everyone gets a chance to contribute

After the Meeting:

- Make sure the minutes are written up
- Ensure actions are progressed. Remember the work takes place between meetings not at them!

A typical Club meeting Clár could look like this:

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising
- Chairperson's Report
- Report back from County Committee
- Any Other Business
- Summary of decisions made
- Close and date of next meeting

