

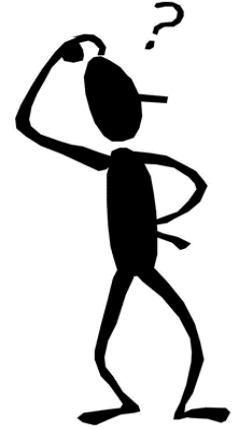
# Cannock Chase DC & Stafford BC

## Chairing Skills

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# Aims of the session



- Look at what makes an effective meeting
  - Understand the role of the Chair
  - Look at the skills and techniques used by effective Chairs
  - Dealing with tricky customers
  - Learn where to go for further resources and opportunities for further advice and assistance
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# Ground rules

- Starting and finishing on time
- Listening to other people without interruption
- Mutual respect for different views
- Keeping personal and political issues at the door
- Maintaining confidentiality



# Cannock Chase DC - main meetings

- Council
- Cabinet
- Licensing & Public Protection
- Planning
- Audit and Governance
- Economic Prosperity Scrutiny
- Health, Wellbeing and The Community Scrutiny
- Responsible Council Scrutiny
- Standards
- Joint Appointments
- Investigatory & Disciplinary
- Appeals and Complaints



# Stafford BC - main meetings

- Council
- Cabinet
- Licensing
- Public Appeals
- Planning
- Audit and Accounts
- Community Wellbeing Scrutiny
- Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny
- Resources Scrutiny
- Standards
- Joint Appointments
- Employee Appeals and Disciplinary



# Discussion

1. What does a good meeting look and feel like in Cannock Chase DC / Stafford BC?
2. What does a bad meeting look and feel like in Cannock Chase DC / Stafford BC?



# What do we mean by 'chairing'?

- Representing the council in meetings, during both formal and informal discussions, and ensuring discussions are carried out in accordance with the council's constitution and procedural rules.
  - Making sure that meetings are run effectively and inclusively, in line with any agreed agenda, to deal with the business at hand. This will include preparation and follow-up, as well as taking charge during the meeting itself.
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# Why good chairmanship is important

- Unproductive meetings are a waste of time
- Conflicting needs have to be balanced
- Provides clear leadership and direction
- Effectively managed meetings can:
  - ✓ save time and energy
  - ✓ contribute to team work
  - ✓ be a source of inspiration
  - ✓ enable individuals to contribute effectively





# When to chair

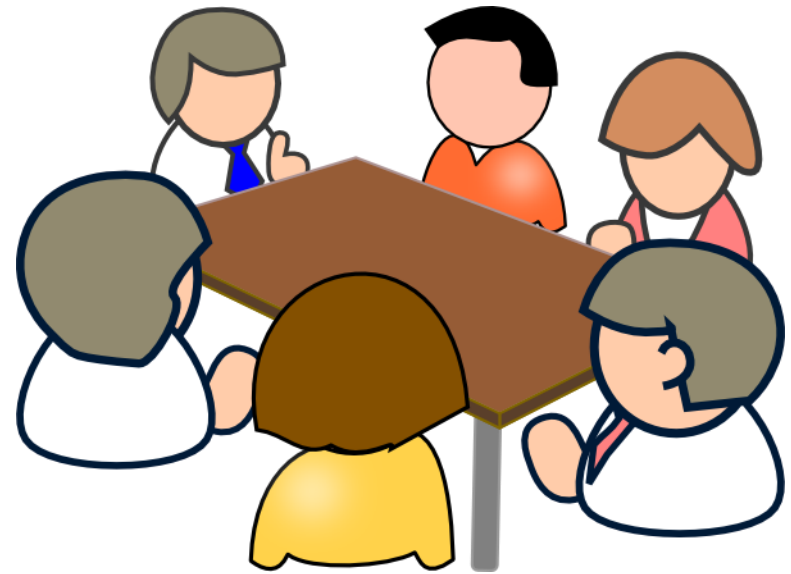
- Chairing is not just about what happens in the meeting. Successful chairs are working:
  - Pre-meeting - laying the ground work for success, getting a handle on the issues and building relationships
  - During the meeting itself - maintaining purpose and order, ensuring productive and fair engagement
  - After the meeting - reviewing actions, maintaining progress, keeping stakeholders informed

All three are vital to effective chairing

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# Chairing an effective meeting – 5 phases

- Preparation
- Opening the meeting
- Managing the business
- Close the meeting
- Post meeting follow up



# The chair needs multiple skills ...

- Leadership and motivational abilities
- Facilitation and influencing skills
- Interviewing and questioning
- Active listening and behaviour awareness
- Ability to manage conflict
- Relationship management and team-building
- Time management
- Political nous and understanding the motivations of others



# Discussion: handling politics

- What can go wrong?
- How do politics impact discussions at meetings?
- What is the role of the Chair/Vice-Chair here?



# Meetings – common challenges/pitfalls

- Meeting overruns - insufficient time for discussion
  - Discussions getting off the point – rambling by individuals
  - Aggression among participants – potential for conflict
  - Some participants not able or willing to contribute to debates
  - Taking a vote
  - Public expectations not managed
  - Lack of clarity on what happens after each meeting
  - Holding people to account
  - Political posturing
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# The perils of 'Groupthink'

- Group consensus overrides people's desire to present alternative view
- Can you spot it?
- Check assumptions
- Encourage ideas
- Examine alternatives
- Use external facilitator
- Gather information from other sources



# Effective meetings – top tips for everyone

- Preparation and participation
- Dealing with conflict
- Effective listening and questioning
- Meeting atmosphere
- Working cross party
- Think about the picture any observers will get



# Further learning



- Resources from the LGA include:
    - [Councillor workbooks](#)
    - [Chairing Skills workbook](#)
    - [Local Leadership Framework for Councillors](#)
    - [Councillor Hub](#)
  - Asking a (trusted) friend to observe you and give you feedback
  - Initiate feedback after meeting
  - Collective review (e.g. Scrutiny Committee)
  - Practise, practise, practise!
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