



# HOLDING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

To function as a group, the members of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme need to meet regularly. Remember, Neighbourhood Watch meetings are optional so they need to be worthwhile to ensure people come. Planning and management can make all the difference.

## Planning

Before you start, think - do you actually need a meeting? Avoid having a meeting just for the sake of it - people will lose interest if they feel that the meeting doesn't have a purpose.

Here are our top tips for planning your meeting:

- Be clear what needs to be achieved and make the agenda varied and interesting.
- Have items for presentation and discussions as well as admin.
- Aim for a mixture of information and decisions on actions.
- Allow anyone to raise an item.
- Have all items submitted in advance. You can then distribute the agenda beforehand, reminding people about the meeting and giving them time to prepare.

Set the date of meetings for the next six months or a year so that people can put them in their diaries and so that you can book the venues and speakers in advance. Find out which dates and times are inconvenient or unpopular and avoid them.

Have a system so that people can contact the secretary with items for the agenda. Set a deadline for items to be submitted – for example 10 days before the meeting.

## Management

While meetings should always have a clear purpose, you'll lose momentum if you leave too much time between them. Schedule regular times you know suit everyone. The trick is to hold them just far enough apart that there's always something to discuss.

Make sure the venue is:

- The right size for the number of people you expect to attend.
- Conveniently located (remember, not everyone will have a car).
- Safe - people don't want to reach the venue by walking up a dark alleyway.

No matter what size the meeting, you will get better results by arranging the seating in a circle. This is much less formal than a 'classroom' or 'theatre' style and helps people to feel that their opinions are welcomed.

### **Five tips for effective meetings**

1. Tailor the event to your audience. Choose a suitably sized, accessible and safe venue. Arrange seating in a circle to facilitate discussion. Try to start and finish on time.
2. When you agree a project, break it down into small tasks to make it easier to achieve.
3. If you are discussing another organisation, ensure that either the relevant people can attend or you have good information from them.
4. To make meetings more interesting, you could offer one 'special' item: a presentation from a guest speaker such as a police officer, perhaps.
5. Try and identify the good and bad points in your meetings. Ask other members to give opinions – anonymously, if they wish. Don't play blame games. It is important not to concentrate on individual personalities, but, instead, work on improving processes.

### **The Committee**

The job of the Chair includes:

- Making sure the meeting makes best use of the time available.
- Encouraging people to work as a team.
- Maintaining order in the meeting.
- Making decisions and having a casting vote if a decision can't be made without it.
- Ending the meeting when business has been completed.

The job of the Secretary includes:

- Organising the meeting agenda.
- Taking notes of meetings (particularly recording action points and decisions made).
- Sending meeting notes to the chair for approval and then to committee members and attendees.
- Making sure that copies of the notes are kept in a safe place.
- Dealing with correspondence.

The job of the Treasurer includes:

- Keeping financial records.
- Reporting to meetings on the state of finances.
- Finding out about potential funding sources.
- Estimating the costs of projects you want to undertake.