

## OPEN MEETINGS GUIDANCE

Representative Body and Board meetings are usually open to members of the Society, for them to observe proceedings. RBH considers that this facilitates the open and transparent conduct of the Board's and Representative Body's business. It ensures that it maintains a close relationship with its members and generates trust, openness and accountability.

For the avoidance of doubt, meetings of the Committees of the Board, meetings of Representative Body working groups and the Mutual Governance Commission are not open to members to observe.

It is important to recognise that these are not public meetings. Any member attending a Board or Representative Body meeting attends purely as an observer. The Secretary may decline to permit a person to attend on reasonable grounds.

### **A. Attending Meetings**

Dates, times and venues of the meetings of the Representative Body and the Board will be published on the RBH website and publicised through Membership Matters.

Any member wishing to attend a meeting must contact the Governance Team (01706 273809, [rbh.governance@rbh.org.uk](mailto:rbh.governance@rbh.org.uk)), giving at least 48 hours notice that they wish to attend. If a member wishes to attend and has specific access needs, such as wheelchair access, this information must be provided when the request to attend is made. Members who do not follow this procedure may not be admitted to the meeting.

Members attending the meeting may be required to provide identification and to sign in on arrival at the meeting. The names provided through this process may be listed among the attendees included in the official minutes of the meeting. Attendees may also be asked to comply with measures to address safety and security considerations.

Space in the meeting room is limited. Attendance is on a 'first come first served' basis. If a large number of people attending the meeting wish to attend with an interest in one particular item on the agenda, a representative should be nominated to attend on behalf of the group.

It is the expectation that the business of the meeting can proceed appropriately and with full attention to a safe, comfortable and secure environment for all meeting participants.

Transport and parking arrangements are the responsibility of the attendees, as are all costs associated with attendance at the meeting.

**B. Attendees are asked to note the following matters:**

- Attendees will not be provided with a copy of the meeting papers, but will be provided with a copy of the agenda.
- Attendees may only speak if invited to by the Chair.
- An issue will not be deferred because members cannot be present for the meeting.
- The Chair will not permit debate of questions regarding individual cases or complaints including issues that are sensitive and/or confidential.
- The Chair will ensure that meetings take place without disruptions. The Chair has the right to exclude members if they cause disruptions.
- Observers must leave the meeting immediately if requested to do so by the Chair.
- Any attendee (Board Member, employee or member) will withdraw when requested to do so by the Chair.
- No audio or visual recording by any attendee at the meeting is permitted without prior approval by the Chair. Attendees can take written note of the meeting.

**C. Conflicts of Interest**

Board Members and Representatives are required to state at the start of the meeting if they have an interest in any of the items to be discussed. Members attending meetings will be given an opportunity to do this by the Governance Team at the start of the meeting and to state whether they have any relevant formal affiliations.

**D. Debate**

The Board/Representative Body consider the items on the agenda in turn. At a meeting, each report for decision includes a recommendation as to what should be decided. For some items, there may be a presentation whereas for others this may not be necessary. Not every item may be actively discussed but this does not mean that the item has not received careful consideration but means that no-one wants to challenge the recommendation. A formal vote will not be taken if there is a general consensus on a suggested course of action.

Depending on the type of meeting being held by the Representative Body, there may not be reports presented as it may not be appropriate.

## **E. Confidential Items**

Board and Representative Body meetings are open except for matters which may be deemed to be confidential. Confidential matters are addressed in closed session, which Members will not be permitted to observe. Closed sessions may be held at the beginning or the end of meetings. On occasion, it may be necessary for the whole of a meeting to be closed to member attendance. Only those persons authorised by the Chair to remain at the closed session of the meeting will be permitted to remain.

Closed sessions will be held to discuss items of a confidential nature, including but not limited to: personal matters about an identifiable individual (including tenants and employees), a proposed or pending acquisition of land for RBH purposes, employment issues, litigation or potential litigation affecting RBH, the receiving of advice that is subject to solicitor/client privilege.

Confidential reports will not be made available for public inspection.

## **F. Questions from Members**

If there are specific questions for the Board or Representative Body, these cannot be raised at the meeting. Any questions should be submitted in advance, via the Governance Team, who will then pass them onto the Chair of the relevant meeting. The Chair will then decide whether to address these during the meeting. Questions may not be considered if they fall outside of the remit of the particular meeting or it may not be possible for an answer to be given immediately. Written answers will normally be provided within seven days.

## **G. Minutes**

A record of the issues discussed and the decisions taken at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which will be approved as a correct record at the next meeting. Minutes as presented to the next meeting are available upon request. Any items marked as confidential will be omitted from the published minutes if they remain confidential.