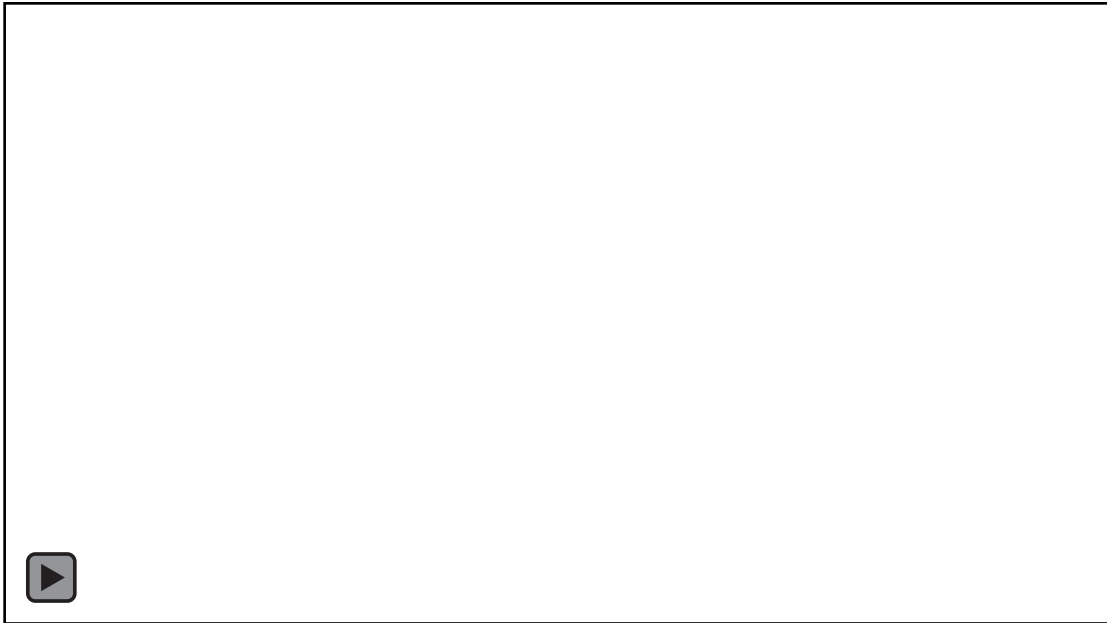# Minutes - Top ten tips

Purpose of minutes

1 Record decisions made by the committee, and possibly (briefly) the reasons for them.

2 Note action required, and by whom.

3 Provide a record of those present at the meeting.

4 Communicate information to people who weren't there.

Good minutes take time

- Allocate time after the meeting to write the minutes.

- Writing the minutes can take a reasonably experienced Secretary about twice as long as the discussion lasted.

Minutes should be as brief as possible

Avoid minuting lengthy exchanges between members and repeating content contained within the reports.

Be selective and only pick up the relevant, main threads.

The final minute should summarise the main points of a discussion, leading logically and clearly to any decisions or outcomes.

Minutes should be self contained

- Any reader, including those not present at the meeting, should be able to understand easily what was discussed and the outcome.

Minutes should be impersonal

Names of individual speakers should not be recorded, instead minutes should provide a summary of the discussion.

Minutes should be decisive

- Minutes should be as decisive and unambiguous as possible.

Minutes are discoverable

- Keep in mind that minutes are formal records of proceedings and can be open to external verification (by auditors or regulators) and be subject to requests for disclosure.

Minutes are written in the past tense

- Instead of "The Committee agrees that […]", write "The Committee agree*d* that […]"

Structure of a minute
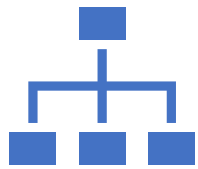
Every minute is usually structured as follows:

Introduction.

Summary.

Record of decisions made / conclusion / actions required.

To aid consistency it is useful to use a minute template.

Minute template