Episode 12 Before You Sit Down

A well-structured agenda is the single most powerful tool a Chair has for running a good meeting. This four-section structure keeps formalities brief, puts strategic discussion where members are freshest, moves reports to information-only, and keeps operational detail out of the formal record. Adapt the item numbers and names to suit your organisation, but keep the structure intact.

Four-Part Meeting Agenda *A Meeting of the Committee of [Organisation name] will be held on [Day], [Date] at [Location] commencing at [Time]*	
SECTION 1 — FORMALITIES	
1. Welcome and Apologies	*The Chair opens the meeting and notes apologies received in advance. Members who did not notify are recorded as Absent — not Apology.*
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting Minutes of the meeting held on [date] — for approval	*Previous minutes are distributed with the agenda. Members send minor corrections to the Secretary before the meeting. Substantive amendments are raised here.*
3. Matters Arising / Action List	*Status updates only. Items requiring discussion go elsewhere on the agenda — not here.*
4. Declarations of Interest	*A standing item at every meeting. Conflicts of Interest are managed in accordance with your Conflicts of Interest Policy.*
SECTION 2 — STRATEGIC DISCUSSION *Address significant matters while members are fresh. Do not leave strategic discussion until last. Urgent matters arising since the agenda was distributed are raised here, briefly, under Current Issues.*	
5. Matters for Discussion and Decision 5.1 Current Issues Update 5.2 [Topic] 5.3 [Topic]	*Strategic items extracted from reports are listed here for proper discussion.*
6. Governance 6.1 [e.g Finance Policy annual review, as per Compliance Calendar]	*One or two governance items per meeting, drawn from your Compliance Calendar. Spread these across the year — not left to pile up at year end.*
SECTION 3 — REPORTS *All reports are distributed with the agenda and read before the meeting. The Chair asks for questions or points of clarification only — not for reports to be read aloud.*	
7. Financial Reports	*The Treasurer notes the reports as distributed and invites questions. Significant financial matters requiring decision have already been extracted to Section 2.*
8. Reports for Noting 8.1 [Report name — Presenter] 8.2 [Report name — Presenter] 8.3 [Report name — Presenter]	*Reports are for information. If there are no questions, they are taken as read. Items requiring decision have been extracted to Section 2.*
SECTION 4 — MANAGEMENT ITEMS *Operational matters, task allocation and progress updates. More informal. Item 10 can be dealt with and the formal meeting can be closed before management discussion if the Committee prefers.*	
9. Management Items	*Specific operational matters. Add items as needed.*
10. Next Meeting and Close Next meeting: [date and time]	*Confirm the next meeting date. The Chair formally closes the meeting.*