

UNISON SOUTH EAST REGION Working Together Guidelines For Meetings

In UNISON we organise many meetings and everyone has an equal right to participate in these. We have the right not to be made to feel uncomfortable as a result of the behaviour of others. The trade union movement represents all working people, regardless of gender, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, age or disability. To help us work together successfully, the following guidelines have been drawn up.

Working Together

We all bring valuable knowledge and ideas to meetings. We can help to create the right atmosphere to allow us to share these equally by:

- Indicating to the chairperson whenever we wish to speak and waiting to be called upon.
- Listening to what others have to say and not interrupting.
- Make our own contribution politely, as clear and concise as possible and do not dominate the discussion.
- Ensure that everyone who wishes to speak is given encouragement and the opportunity to do so.

Language

Putting forward your views is an important part of a meeting. Take care not to use initials or jargon unless you explain what you mean. During the meeting, always use language that you know will not offend or hurt others. Discriminatory language of any description will not be tolerated. Language which contains discriminatory references and which is abusive or threatening in any way should not be used and nor should jokes or comments which perpetuate discrimination.

Body language is also an important part of communication and should not be used to interrupt or disconcert speakers.

If you experience anything during the meeting that you feel is not acceptable, please tell the chair.

Harassment

There must be no harassment or bullying at any time, including scheduled breaks and socialising afterwards. Harassment, in general terms is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person, provided that it could reasonably be considered to have that effect.

What is important is not necessarily the action, but how the recipient feels about what has been done.

It may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, maternity, pregnancy, marital or civil partnership status, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

Smoking

Smoking or use of e-cigarettes is not permitted in UNISON meetings. Participants who smoke will be able to do so in outside areas as designated by the venue during scheduled breaks.

Mobile Telephones

Please switch all mobile phones to silent or vibrate at the start of the meeting. If the Chair notifies the meeting that there is an induction loop system in use, then unfortunately it is not sufficient to switch them to silent or vibrate as the incoming signals will still interfere with the system and they should instead be turned off. If you need your phone on during the meeting, please notify the Chair.

Timekeeping

It is helpful if everyone tries to arrive on time and stay until the end of the meeting. As this is not always possible please try to ensure the meeting is not disrupted if you arrive late or leave early and notify the Chair in advance where possible.

Access

No-one should be prevented from participating in a meeting because of access requirements. The Regional Disability Access Passport should be completed in advance of a meeting to request appropriate adjustments. Individuals should update the passport as and when their needs change, and send an up to date version. The Regional Access Standards should be adhered to in meetings to ensure that everyone can fully participate. If lunch is being provided please also notify us of any special dietary needs.

Personal assistants and service providers

Where requested, meetings of the committee are supported by a number of service providers such as technicians, interpreters and personal assistants. Please make sure that nothing you do interferes with them carrying out their work.

Personal assistants and service providers do not get involved in policy development discussions, even if they are active members of UNISON. They are present to ensure that access is in place, barriers are removed and that meetings can proceed.

Allergies

Please notify the Chair of any allergies in advance of the meeting that may affect your participation. If the Chair notifies the meeting of any allergies, please respect this and ensure that anything in the room that may affect another attendee is removed in advance of the meeting and is not present throughout the meeting.

Finally

These guidelines are intended to help us all during meetings to make sure that no-one feels excluded as a result of the language, action or attitudes of others. They also aim to promote UNISON's policies on equal opportunities in a positive and practical way.