



## **Making sense of formal meeting procedure**

- Formal meeting procedure can seem strange and a bit intimidating. The first point to note is it only needs to be employed when deemed useful. It's useful when the sub-branch is considering a matter of controversy and/or a matter on which it would help to demonstrate the strength of shared feeling.
- For much of sub-branch business, formal meeting procedure is not necessary. It's enough for meeting participants to simply speak through the chair and adhere to whatever rules the sub-branch agrees will help meetings run smoothly.

### **Moving a motion**

- Formal debate starts with a motion. The motion must be 'moved' and 'seconded' for it to be debated. If there's no seconder, the motion lapses.
- Preferably, the mover of the motion submits it in writing to the chair and the chair reads it out so everybody's really clear what's being proposed.

### **Alternate speakers for and against**

- Once the motion has been moved, the chair invites the mover to speak for the motion.
- The chair then invites any speakers against the motion (or who want to move an amendment). The chair must alternate between speakers for and against the motion.

### **Moving an amendment**

- After each speaker, the chair calls for speakers who want to speak for or against the motion or who want to move an amendment.
- An amendment can involve adding, deleting or modifying the motion but it must be consistent with the broad spirit of the motion. The chair will disallow the amendment if it fundamentally contradicts the original motion.
- For an amendment to be debated, it needs to be seconded.
- Once the motion is seconded, debate on the original motion is suspended and debate takes place on the amendment. The meeting decides whether it wants to adopt the amendment to the motion before it returns to the debate of the motion itself.
- The chair invites speakers alternately for and against the amendment, starting with the mover of the amendment.
- When debate is concluded, the chair calls for a vote on the amendment. If the amendment is adopted, the meeting returns to debating the now-amended motion. If the motion is not adopted, the meeting returns to debating the unamended motion.

### **Bringing a motion to a vote**

- The chair will call on the meeting to vote on the motion when there are no more speakers for or against (as is appropriate – there can't be two speakers in a row for the same side of the motion) and the original mover of the motion has been given a right of reply.
- At any point in the debate, a member of the meeting can move that the motion be voted on immediately. The chair calls for a vote and, if that is successful, the motion itself is voted on.