Descriptive Agenda

Most agendas give the topic of discussion, but do not describe task which the people at the meeting need to achieve, in relation to the topic.

A descriptive agenda contains more detail, and helps manage people's expectations about what that part of the meeting will be like. Critically, it give the person running the meeting a clear steer on what the purpose of the item is, making it easier to bring people back to the point.

Compare these two agendas, to see the difference.

Maintains flexibility within a clear structure.

Agenda

1. Minutes and matters arising

2. Finance report

3. Project report

4. Village magazine

5. AOB

6. Date of next meeting

Draft Agenda

1. Introductions and welcome:
- Introductions – everyone introduces themselves.
- Aims and agenda – check that these are appropriate, and that the proposed end-time suits everyone.
- Ground rules – agree how we'll work together.
- Note-taking – agree what we will do about keeping a record of the meeting.

2. Finance report
- Gerry will present a report.
- Questions of clarification.
- Review progress: Are our finances on track? Do we need to adjust our plans?

3. Project progress
- Small group discussion: What's going well? What's going less well? What are the key indicators of progress we should focus on at this stage?
- Feedback and whole group discussion: Discuss and agree key progress indicators. Review how we are doing, against these? What's next?
- Agree any actions.

4. Village magazine
- Discuss and decide: should we contribute £500 towards costs?

5. AOB

6. Next meeting
- Review this meeting.
- Set dates for 2010 – please bring your diaries.
- Agenda for next meeting - please bring your ideas.

Getting explicit agreement at the start reduces the chances of things going off-track later.

Clear "focus questions" for the group to discuss and reach agreement about.

Open questions which invite a diversity of views and perspectives.

Multi-stage process is set out in the agenda, with an 'action' focus at the end.

Very clear question.