

Successful Minute Taking Meeting the Challenge Workbook

Heather Baker



Skills Training Course 
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Successful minute taking – meeting the challenge workbook.

**How to prepare, write and organise agendas and minutes of meetings.
Learn to take notes and write minutes of meetings. Your role as the minute
taker and how you interact with the chair and other attendees.**

Improve your writing skills. A Skills Training Course.
Lots of exercises and free downloadable workbook.

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Successful Minute Taking Workbook

This is the free workbook for Successful Minute Taking. Please do print it and use it alongside the main book. If you'd like order a copy of the main book please either visit www.UoLearn.com where both printed books and ebooks are available or you favorite online bookseller for printed books only.

I'd rather throw myself downstairs

That was how I used to feel about minute taking;

this book is for those among you who feel the same.

It is aimed at secretaries, PAs and administrators and covers the issues that worry them. These are based on the things that worried me and that have worried my hundreds of delegates over the last 10 years.

- ✓ Example minutes and agendas
- ✓ How to develop your skills in note taking
- ✓ Becoming more confident in your role
- ✓ A checklist of what to do before, during and after the meeting
- ✓ Help with layout and writing skills
- ✓ Learn what to include in minutes
- ✓ Understand how to become a better listener
- ✓ How to work well with your chairperson
- ✓ Lots of exercises and easy to read
- ✓ Free downloadable workbook

Learn the skills you need to be an excellent meeting secretary.



About the author: Heather Baker

Heather had over twenty years' experience as a secretary and PA before setting up Baker Thompson Associates Limited in 2000. The company specialises in the training and development of secretarial and administrative staff (www.bakerthompsonassoc.co.uk). She now travels all over the UK working with large and small companies to enable their office staff and PAs to work more effectively and efficiently. She also delivers courses in the Middle and Far East. Heather is a Certified NLP Practitioner.

She worked for ICI Pharmaceuticals (now AstraZeneca) and Hewlett Packard; she spent 5 years in France working for the Commercial Director of Cognac Hine and then 10 years with Granada Media working up to personal assistant to the managing director, commuting regularly between their offices in Manchester and London.

Heather conceived the speedwriting system BakerWrite and wrote the Amazon top five selling book based on this system (Easy 4 Me To Learn Speed Writing, www.UoLearn.com).

She has been married to Ian since 1979 and they have two daughters, Ailsa and Erin.

Praise for minute training

- ✓ "I had a real phobia about minute taking and was dreading today, but you've really taken away my fear. It's all fallen into place." Beverley, Leeds
- ✓ "This was a genuine workshop that taught skills and you came away knowing more than when you went in. Heather was keen to assess our expertise and worked with the group accordingly. Good to see someone presenting without constant reference to notes."
- ✓ "One of the best facilitators ever - quite clearly Heather had an extensive knowledge of the skills needed and she wanted to share best practice. She was keen to hear of other experiences, mixed the group up well and interacted with everyone. Everyone had a part to play and felt confident enough to ask and contribute whatever their level of expertise. Heather was very approachable."
- ✓ "This was an excellent workshop which clearly met all of its objectives. The course was well planned and the subject matter presented in a clear, logical and interesting way."
- ✓ "Heather had very good subject knowledge and is a very good trainer. She used a number of different teaching methods and was excellent at putting the group at ease; everyone joined in." Committee servicing and minute taking for Leeds Metropolitan University
- ✓ "The School has seen a vast improvement in minute taking since staff attended Heather Baker's minute taking session. This has been crucial for the forthcoming audits and we are very grateful to Heather. Staff have commented that instructions and presentation were good and it was a fun session with lots of useful material." Sheila Furmedge, ASIS and Staff Development Manager, University of Huddersfield
- ✓ "It was a really clear, structured course. Good pace (kept to the agenda!). Good to leave a course and feel like I can truly apply what I've learnt to my role."
Minute taking for the National Audit Office
- ✓ "I'm fairly comfortable with taking minutes, but find I write a lot of notes in the meeting which probably aren't necessary. I've learnt how to condense effectively."
- ✓ "Heather was very practical and helpful; understood the reality of taking minutes and not just the theory!"
Minute taking for RiverStone Management Limited
- ✓ "I enjoyed the course and found it relevant to my needs. The trainer was helpful and able to answer questions. She obviously enjoys her work and conveys her enthusiasm to delegates."
- ✓ "I found the course really useful and the style and delivery were very easy to understand."
Bespoke minute taking for Yorkshire Television

Item 1: Meetings

Objectives for item 1, at the end of this item you will:

- ✓ Be aware of different types of meetings
- ✓ Understand the purposes and benefits of meetings
- ✓ Be able to outline why we have minutes
- ✓ Know the key elements of a successful meeting
- ✓ Have a list of business meeting terms and their definitions
- ✓ Have considered meetings within your organisation

Exercise:

What types of meetings do you attend?

How frequent are they?

Purposes and benefits of meetings

Exercise:

Why does your organisation have meetings? Think of ten positive outcomes that have resulted from your meetings.

Exercise: Do you have any other purposes and benefits for your particular meetings?

Why do we have minutes?

Exercise: In your workplace what are minutes used for?

Key elements of a successful meeting

Exercise: If you've attended meetings that didn't work what were the reasons?

What is the best meeting you've ever attended, and why?

Business meeting terms

Exercise: Are there any meeting terms used at work that you are not sure about, if so look them up now.

Item 2: Preparation for a Meeting

Objectives for item 2, at the end of this item you will:

- ✓ Have an overview of the order of tasks that a minute taker might undertake
- ✓ Have examples of different types of agenda
- ✓ Know how to deal with documents that may be needed for a meeting

Arranging the meeting

Exercise: Planning your meeting

How many attendees will there be?

Who are the attendees?

What are their contact details?

Do any of them have special needs such as wheelchair access or an induction loop?

What style of seating do you need (boardroom, cabaret, lecture theatre, circle of chairs)?

What equipment do you need for any presentations?

What refreshments are needed?

Preparing agendas

Exercise:

Does your organisation have anything different on its usual agendas? For instance: introductions or check in/check out. (An insurance company I visited used this to motivate their meeting attendees.)

Exercise: Collect examples of agendas from your organisation. Have a critical look at them, how could you improve their content or style? Are there any common factors such as style or fixed items?

When to distribute

Exercise: When do you distribute your agenda?
Is this the best time?

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Exercise: What other papers do you need to distribute?

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Exercise: Can you think of any other advantages to you preparing the agenda for a meeting you are the minute taker for?

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Item 3: Role and Skills of the Minute Taker

Objectives for item 3, at the end of this item you will:



















































- ✓ Have a definition of the role of the minute taker
- ✓ Know 10 skills required to be an effective minute taker
- ✓ Have considered your level of skill in these areas
- ✓ Have completed exercises to practise some of the skills

Role of the minute taker

Exercise: Are there any tasks you are asked to perform which inhibit your ability to carry out the role of minute taker?

Skills required for taking minutes

Exercise: Rate your own abilities at the skills of a minute taker on a scale of 1 to 5. With 1 being very poor ability and 5 being an excellent command of this skill.

	1	2	3	4	5
Note taking					
English mastery					
Good vocabulary					
Word processing					
Summarising					
Listening					
Proofreading					
Reported speech					
Working with chair					
What to record					

Note taking

Exercise: Is there anything else could you do to get yourself informed for your meetings?

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What do you write in your notes?

Exercise: Have a practice at taking notes from real meetings.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXluP2vjNiw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WahloApfLmI>

(just as far as you want to - it does go on a while)

Exercise: Find a colleague who has written minutes and ask for their 3 best tips.

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A good mastery of English

Grammar

Exercise: Pick out the verb(s), noun(s) and adjective(s) in the following sentences.

1. The usual chairperson read the minutes.
2. It was agreed to increase the annual salaries.
3. Mr Smith volunteered to send an explanatory email.
4. KL said that he would try out the new system.

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Problem words:

Exercise: Are there any words you know you always mix up? If so, look up the correct version and think of a memory link to help you remember the spelling.

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Exercise: Select the correct spelling from the options given in these sentences:

1. He had been practising/practicing medicine for years.
2. It was a nice compliment/complement about my work.
3. The principal/principle reason why the project succeeded was the team management.
4. The chairperson was concerned about the affect/effect this would have on the practise/practice time.

Punctuation

Exercise: Add any missing apostrophes.

1. The clients rooms are nearby. (three clients)
2. The managers response was "no". (one manager)
3. The secretaries attitude must improve.
4. The mens preference was to sit down.
5. The caretaker says that hes happy with this plan.
6. Youre not sure what your choice will be.
7. Its difficult to know if the company and its representatives are included.
8. The SATs were very difficult.

A good vocabulary

Exercise: Re-write the following paragraph to avoid repetition and to flow better.

It was agreed that there was a very good chance that the manager would tell the department what she was going to do. The chairperson said that the CEO had said that everyone should be told about the fact that there could well be redundancies. She also said that she thought this would happen.

Know your own in-house vocabulary

Word	Meaning

Word processing

Exercise: Can you think of anything else to add to your template specific to your minutes?

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You can also then start typing your minutes in advance of the meeting. There are some things which don't go in your template, but which you do know before the meeting:

- Other agenda headings
- Presentations
- Apologies

Exercise: Anything else to add for your minutes?

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Summarising skills – writing the minutes

Now you have a go:

Exercise: Think of ways to improve these phrases and avoid repetition.

1. Jon Smith (JS) brought the sales figures to the meeting. These were distributed to the members of the Committee and discussed and Jane Adams (JA) agreed they had improved. All other attendees agreed they had improved too. It was agreed that a bonus could be paid this year.

2. The repairs needed to the new offices were discussed. It was quite rightly agreed that the walls needed painting, the windows needed replacing and the doors needed replacing. Mr Jones agreed to contact the Board to get their permission to carry out these repairs.

3. JS asked the Committee for their views on the proposed new pay system. JA said she thought it was good, HB said he thought there some issues which should be looked at in more detail. JS and JA agreed with this. These issues were then discussed and everyone then agreed that they would go ahead with this new system.

4. The Committee discussed the half year sales figures ending 30th June. It was noted that a profit of £13 million had been made in the first 6 months of the year.

Proofreading

Exercise: Now have a go at proofreading this extract from some minutes:

1. Apologies for absence
No apologies were recieved.
2. Minutes of the last meeting
The Chairperson asked members to correct a typing erro in item 3.1, as the the figure of £11,200 should read £ 111,200. After this amendment, the minutes were approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.
3. Matters arising
Their were no matters arising.
4. Chairperson's report
The Chairperson pointed out taht over the last 6 months membership had fallen by 20%. She felt that this was due largely to lack of pubilcity during the present year, and also that new employes were not aware of how to join. The following decisions were reached:
 - 4.1 Circular to all staff
A letter would be sent from the Chairperson to all employees who were not members fo the Club. This letter would outline it's aims and activities. A tear-off slip would be included for employees to indicated any areas of interest.
CW
 - 4.2 Social evening
A social evening would be organised specfically for non-members, to include refreshments. Miss Chen agreed to make the arrangments.
CC
5. New aerobics classes
Miss Carol Chen proposed that aerobics classes should be held. Mrs Sharon Warner from the Cool Gym had agreed to conduct these classes on the Companys premises every Wenesday evening from 6-7pm.
Miss Chen will provide further information. CW
1. Any other business
There was no other business.

Reported speech

"I agree," said the chairperson – this is an example of quoted or direct speech; this should never be used in minutes.

We should not quote people but we should report what they say, hence 'reported speech'.
For example: The chairperson said that she agreed.

Exercise: Put the following example of direct speech into reported speech (and third person if necessary).

"We should progress this," he said.

"Be realistic - we can't afford it," she said.

"The plan has worked," she said.

"We've been having a very successful year," they said.

Relationship with the chair

Exercise: Imagine the perfect chairperson.
List things they could do to help you with your role as the minute taker.

OK, so we’ve got some ideas but, if you go to your chair and say, “I’ve read a book on minute taking and I have some great ideas of what you can do to make my life easier,” it may be a lead balloon moment. So, let’s now think about what we, as minute takers, can offer in return.

Exercise: What could you do as the minute taker before, during, after the meeting and on an ongoing basis, to make life easier for your chairperson?
Focus particularly on things you do to help yourself and how these might also help your chair.

Assertiveness

Exercise: Your body position can help your confidence levels. Have a go at the following.

First, bow your head, droop your shoulders, fold your arms tightly, look around the room furtively, think about something a bit sad (not very). Stay like that for a moment or two.

How did you feel?

Your physiology affects your mood and vice versa.

If you want to appear and feel confident, you need to sit up straight, head up, open your arms, shoulders back and look directly at something in the room. Think of something you enjoy doing and you are good at. It doesn't have to have anything at all to do with work.

Now how do you feel?

So if you don't really feel confident, act as if you are by changing your body position and thinking of something you're good at.

So, how can we use this in meetings?

Exercise: Are there any changes you need to make to the way you work with other people to help you perform your role better?

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What to record

Exercise: What do you have to record for your organisation?

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Item 4: Examples of Minutes

Objectives for item 4, at the end of this item you will:

- ✓ Have examples of different types of minutes
- ✓ Have designed a layout for your minutes

Layout of minutes:

Exercise: Get hold of some minutes from your company.

Is there a standard layout?

Are they easy to read?

Can you identify what the actions are and who should do them?

Can you match the minutes to the agenda for that same meeting?

How formal are they?

How are names used?

Examples of minutes:

There are lots of examples of minutes on the internet. Here are a couple of different styles for you to look at. They are not necessarily perfect but they can give you ideas for different styles.

Exercise: Have a look at the following minutes, what do you like about them? What could be improved?

<http://www.fsa.gov.uk/Pages/Library/corporate/Board/index.shtml>

<http://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/democracy/default.aspx?id=264.xml> (brown ones with m on for minutes, reddish brown with a for agenda)

<http://www.council.bham.ac.uk/meetings/>

Item 5: Minute Writing Exercise

Objectives for item 5, at the end of this item you will:

- ✓ Have practised your new skills by writing minutes from a script

Exercise: Use the transcript below to write a set of minutes for the meeting. You can assume that everyone, that was there, spoke at least once.

AGENDA for the staff meeting on Weds 4th April

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Staff canteen accounts
5. Reception refurbishment
6. Student placements
7. Summer barbeque
8. Any other business
9. Date of next meeting

Meeting transcript

Lily Green (Chairperson)	Good afternoon everyone. Taylor Black won't be here today; he's had to meet up with our contacts at Colours Limited. Was everyone happy with the last minutes? (all nod) Can we sign them? (Chairperson signs) Good, matters arising? Anything to report?
Bradley Brown	Daisy and I spoke to Heather about her training and we've agreed to finance this. She won't be here for the next meeting as she will be on the first day.
Chairperson	That's good. Right, let's move on to item 4. Marcus, you wanted to discuss the accounts for the canteen. Can we see copies of these?

Marcus Blue	Yes, I have copies for everyone (distributes copies). We made a profit of £1,300 over the first 6 months of the year. I thought it would be a good idea to get some new chairs with some of the money – the existing ones are a bit wobbly!
Chairperson	Good idea, Marcus, but could you get some costs for us at look at during the next meeting? (Mr Blue agrees)
Chairperson	OK let's look at the next item. Some people have commented that our reception area is looking rather tatty.
Hazel Fawn	I thought the same, it needs redecorating and modernising.
Chairperson	Who would like to get some quotes for this?
Hazel Fawn	Yes, I'll do that. We've got some good contacts we can speak to.
Chairperson	Right, that's something else to continue with next time. Cameron, you're next.
Cameron White	We would like to start taking on work experience students, which will hopefully raise the company's profile and give us access to new staff as we expand. We could perhaps take on two students in September and pay them if possible.
Hazel Fawn	That would be an excellent idea.
Chairperson	I agree, but I don't think we can authorise it. Cameron, would you email the directors and ask them to discuss it at the board meeting and let us know their decision?
Cameron White	I will.
Chairperson	Now, the final item. Summer barbeque. Rose, have you got the menus?
Rose Pink	Yes, I was able to get hold of quite a few. (distributes copies)
Cameron White	I like the look of the Canalside Hotel menu and they have facilities for if it rains.
Bradley Brown	It does look good – not too expensive either.
Rose Pink	Shall we go for that one then? (agreement)
Chairperson	What date seems the best?
Rose Pink	The last Friday evening in June will work for the majority of staff?
Chairperson	That's great, Rose, can you make the arrangements?
Rose Pink	Yes, I'll book the hotel and send an email to all the staff. Should be good.
Chairperson	I'm looking forward to it. Any other business, anyone? No? OK, let's meet again in 3 weeks' time.

Your version of the minutes:

Example answer: Minutes of the staff meeting held on Weds 4th April

Present:

Lily Green (chair), Marcus Blue, Bradley Brown, Hazel Fawn, Rose Pink, Cameron White, Glenda Green (Minutes)

1 Apologies: Apologies were received from Taylor Black

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read, agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

3 Matters arising

Bradley Brown and Daisy had agreed to finance Heather's training, which starts on 25th April.

4 Staff canteen accounts

Marcus Blue distributed copies of the canteen accounts which showed a profit of £1,300 over the first 6 months of the year.

It was suggested that new chairs be bought with some of this profit and Marcus agreed to obtain estimates for discussion at the next meeting.

MB, 25/4

5 Reception refurbishment

Following comments that the reception area looked rather shabby, Hazel Fawn offered to get quotations for redecorating and modernising. These will be discussed at the next meeting.

HF, 25/4

6 Student placements

Cameron White outlined proposals to take on work experience students to raise the company's profile and give access to new staff. He suggested two paid positions.

This was thought to be an excellent idea but the Chairperson stated that Board approval was required.

Cameron agreed to email the directors to ask them to discuss this at their meeting.

CW

7 Summer barbeque

Rose Pink agreed to book the Canalside Hotel for this event on 30 June and to send an email to inform all staff.

RP

8 Any other business: There was no other business.

9 Date of next meeting: Weds 25th April

Item 6: Checklist and Action Plan

Objectives for item 6, at the end of this item you will:

- ✓ Have looked at the checklist of tasks and tailored it to fit your timings
- ✓ Have produced an action plan to ensure you put into practice your new skills

Checklist for successful meeting organisation

The suggested timings work for most meetings but this will depend on the nature of your business and how well your systems work so you need to fill in your actual timings.

Before the meeting:

	Details	Suggested timing before	Your timing
1	Arrange meeting with all attendees	3-4 weeks	
2	Book room, refreshments and equipment (be aware of any special needs)	3-4 weeks	
3	Nominate chairperson and minute taker	3-4 weeks	
4	Draft agenda	2 weeks	
5	Get informed on topics to be discussed	2 weeks	
6	Speak to or meet any attendees who can increase your knowledge	2 weeks	
7	Meet with the chairperson to discuss requirements for the meeting and the minutes and agree agenda	1 week	
8	Distribute agenda and papers	1 week	
9	Email to remind people to bring papers from the previous meeting, such as minutes	1 week	
10	Start writing your minutes on the template now saved as a word document	1 week	
11	Prepare your dress and behaviour (what shall I wear, what might I say)	1 week	
12	Check refreshments are OK	2 days	
13	Seating plan, if required	2 days	
14	Ensure you have plenty of paper and pens (or a laptop – is there plenty of battery time left?)	1 day	
15	Arrive at the meeting room early to set up and check – select your and the chairperson's seats if not already assigned	On the day	
16	Greet people as they arrive. Unless it is specifically part of your role, don't get involved in making/ serving drinks as this is a distraction from minute taking. If it is your role, you may want to question this.	On the day	

During the meeting:

	Details
1	Keep an eye on the time for the chairperson; timings can be included on the agenda
2	Listen
3	Take notes, not minutes
4	Interact assertively when required
5	Assist the chairperson as agreed

After the meeting:

	Details	Suggested timing after	Your timing
1	Review your notes as quickly as possible	On the day	
2	Start typing the minutes – just a rough draft first of all	On the day or 1 day later	
3	Summarise the meeting and convert your notes to minutes	Next 2-3 days	
4	Proofread your minutes	Day after writing minutes	
5	Ask the chairperson to check the minutes if necessary	Next 3-4 days	
6	Distribute as appropriate	As soon as ready	
7	Go back to beginning of this list for the next meeting!		

Personal action plan

What was I most worried about regarding minute taking?
How am I going to deal with this?

Five things I am going to do from the next working day to improve my
minute taking skills:

Five things I am going to do from the following week to improve my minute taking skills:

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Further training I would like to pursue:

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Item 7: Answers to some of the exercises

Page 48

Verbs, underlined, **nouns** bold and adjectives grey.

1. The usual **chairperson** read the **minutes**.
2. It was agreed to increase the annual **salaries**.
3. **Mr Smith** volunteered to send an explanatory **email**.
4. **KL** said that **he** would try out the new **system**.

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1. He had been **practicing(US) practising(UK)** medicine for years.
2. It was a nice **compliment** about my work.
3. The **principal** reason why the project succeeded was the team management.
4. The chairperson was concerned about the **effect** this would have on the **practice** time.

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1. The clients' rooms are nearby.
2. The manager's response was "no".
3. The secretaries' attitude must improve.
4. The men's preference was to sit down.
5. The caretaker says that he's happy with this plan.
6. You're not sure what your choice will be.
7. It's difficult to know if the company and its representatives are included.
8. The SATs were very difficult.

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It was agreed that the manager would probably outline her plans to the department. The chairperson reported the CEO's comment that everyone should be told of the likelihood of redundancies. She added that she concurred with this.

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1. Based on the improved sales figures, it was agreed that a bonus could be paid this year.
2. Mr Jones agreed to contact the Board to obtain permission to carry out required repairs to the new offices.
3. The proposed new pay system will be implemented.

4. It was noted that a profit of £13 million had been made in the 6 months to 30th June.

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1. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting**

The Chairperson asked members to correct an error in item 3.1, where the figure of £11,200 should read £111,200. After this amendment, the minutes were approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Chairperson's report**

The Chairperson pointed out that over the last 6 months membership had fallen by 20%. She felt that this was due largely to lack of publicity during the present year, and also that new employees were not aware of how to join. The following decisions were reached.

4.1 Circular to all staff

A letter would be sent from the Chairperson to all employees who were not members of the Club. This letter would outline its aims and activities. A tear-off slip would be included for employees to indicate any areas of interest. CW

4.2 Social evening

A social evening would be organised specifically for non-members, to include refreshments. Miss Chen agreed to make the arrangements. CC

5. **New aerobics classes**

Miss Carol Chen proposed that aerobics classes should be held. Mrs Sharon Warner from the Cool Gym had agreed to conduct these classes on the Company's premises every Wednesday evening from 6-7pm.

Miss Chen will provide further information. CC

6. **Any other business**

There was no other business.

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1. He said this should be progressed.
2. She stated that realistically it could not be afforded.
3. She said the plan had worked.
4. They said they had been having a very successful year.

Item 9: About the publishers

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