

## The Role of the Committee Secretary Webinar – October 2022 - Transcript

James Bluring: So hopefully you've seen the objectives for today's session in the brief when you signed up, but just to recap quickly, what I'd like to do is just spend an initial bit of time looking at how governance works in general at Sussex,

because obviously the role of the committee secretary is built upon how governance works across the University, and then just touch on some of the support available to you as a committee secretary too.

We're then going to look at some of the specifics of being a committee secretary and then we'll move on to look at how agendas work, how you work with a chair, and how you can integrate that with governance across the University.

We'll then have a break, and then we'll move on to looking at minutes.

I could probably spend an entirely separate session about minutes in themselves. So it's going to be just touching on some of the best practice elements of minutes rather than in too much detail.

But it would be interesting to have your feedback afterwards if you'd like to follow up on minutes specifically.

And then finally, I'm going to have quite a brief session on how to manage committee information on Sussex Direct, which if you don't know what that is, I'll come on to explain it.

So that's how it's going to look in terms of timings today.

I'll make sure that we do get a ten-minute break because there's going to be quite a lot of information in there.

And I'll also try and make sure that we've got time for a bit of Q&A at the end as well.

Also, you've probably picked up from the overview that this is going to be very broad. It's intended for both people that want a refresh and they're quite familiar with being a committee secretary.

But it's also intended for people that are perhaps entirely new to being a committee secretary. And by the nature of having to be so broad, inevitably you might have other questions.

You can either ask those today or just follow up with me on email as well.

And also the other thing I wanted to be clear at the outset is I'll be going through some perhaps best practice and some suggestions about how you do things.

You might do things differently. And for the majority of cases, that's probably absolutely fine.

These are recommendations for how you might want to do things rather than the only way that you can do things as a committee secretary.

Are there any questions at the outset or before we move on to the first section? Everyone happy? Hopefully. Great. I haven't got the chat open.

Can I find it, where's the chat? Let me just make sure I've got the chat open so I'm not missing anything. Okay. Nothing in the chat. Yeah, fine.

All right. Well, in that case, let's move on to talk about governance at Sussex.

So in talking about what governance is at Sussex, I thought we'd just start off with trying to pin down a bit more about what is governance when we talk about it quite a lot in this session.

So there's a few different definitions that you could use, and I've just picked a couple here. This one from the University of York talks about governance in quite a formal setting.

So it talks about how universities are organised, how they're managed, and who's accountable within the University for overseeing how it's working in general.

This one from Shattock is, again, quite formal. It talks about University governance being about how it's constituted and how its process is governed, how it works on a day to day and then a longer-term version.

So both of those are quite sort of formal, structural.

The one that I quite like and I wanted to touch on here, because it will come back to some of the elements of it a bit later, is this one from Edwards, and this tries to talk about governance, not only in terms of what they're doing, but the way that they're managing themselves.

So what Edwards is kind of suggesting in this is that it's not only about organisation, structures, management, constitution,

but it's also about how we give people a voice within the University as well, how stakeholders both in and outside the University can contribute to the University's governance.

And that's something that I just wanted to perhaps suggest we keep in mind as we go through the rest of the presentation today.

So if you talk about governance, then the next question I guess is, what's good governance?

And this is where a committee secretary plays a really important role. So good governance is obviously dependent on who's asking in a way.

But these are sort of perhaps four key features that we would expect from governance being done well in an institution.

So the first one is saying that, well, governance is making sure that we're doing the right thing in the right way at the right time for the right reasons.

So a committee secretary is really instrumental in that.

A committee secretary is one of the key people that can understand when we need to take a decision to a committee and thinking ahead about what's coming down the road that the committee needs to be aware of. Culture and structure, we'll come on to a bit more about some of this.

But this is essentially saying that it's about operating ethically and sustainably alongside not just being legally compliant but doing it in a way that's ethical.

The committee secretary working with the chair is going to be really instrumental in this because it's the chair primarily that sets the culture for a committee. And we'll come on to a bit more about that in a moment.

Accessibility. We mentioned this already in terms of importance about how we're engaging stakeholders in decision-making across the University.

And when we come along a bit later to talk about your roles and making sure that we're being transparent in how committees are run, their papers, making sure staff across the institution have access to that information when it's appropriate.

That all comes back to the accessibility principle.

And then finally, good governance should be focused and it should be enabling. So it shouldn't just be a bureaucratic process that we undertake just to feed a machine.

I know it can probably feel like that a lot of the time but in the end, good governance is about making sure that we're doing it purposefully and not just for the sake of it.

So a bit about the governance team. If you've already come across us, we're a small team that's based in governance - General Counsel, Governance and Compliance, and we are based in Sussex House and we do a number of different things.

Part of that is making sure that the committee system is running effectively and efficiently, and we also provide direct support to Council, which is our governing body here at the University.

And also, some of its other committees as well, like SPRC, Audit and Risk as well as UEG as well.

I'm secretary to the University Executive Group and also support the University Leadership Team.

So we don't directly support all committees across the University, but what we are is a central point of contact for you, particularly as committee secretaries, but also for people like our independent governors who sit on Council.

And we are an interface between the University and them as well. And I just wanted to make it clear that we are here to help and please do come to us with any questions that you might have.

I can guarantee you that they're probably not silly questions. And if you're wondering it, probably someone else is wondering it too.

So please do get in touch with us at any time. You don't have to be working to a Council or Senate level committee. You can be involved in any group or committee across the University, and we'd be really pleased to help.

So I'm just looking very quickly at the foundations of Sussex Governance. You've probably aware that Sussex has been in existence since the early sixties and received its Royal Charter in 1961.

We amended that in 2012. Some elements of our governance have to be amended via the Privy Council, which requires us to seek approval externally for that.

Everything else we can manage ourselves. And I'll come on to the distinction between those in a second. We are here for a charitable purpose.

We're an exempt charity, which means that although we have charitable status, we are overseen by the Office for Students who are our regulator, and in delivering on our charitable objectives.

Our charter. It's a very short document, and this is one of the things that the Privy Council oversees. So if we want to change anything about our charter and statutes, we have to approach the Privy Council.

And the charter effectively sets out some high-level powers of the University, and it also sets out the fact that we need to have in existence a Council, a Senate, which is our governing academic body, and also a Students Union.

And then we also below our charter have something called our statutes, and the statutes provide a bit more detail on the specific powers, and the membership of our Council, membership and powers of our Senate,

and also what our regulations should cover; for example, particularly in terms of employment matters to do with our staff.

And then finally, below statutes are our regulations. And these can kind of be thought of as our general rule book for how we run the University.

And they, broadly speaking, translate the statutes into an operational set of rules and a sort of set of guidance about how the University should be structured and run.

So you've got charters and statutes at the top, regulations below. We can change our regulations, although there's a very specific process to doing that. Charter and statutes, we have to approach Privy Council to do.

Sorry Carly, I missed your question about contacting the team. I will follow up after this training with a copy of the slides and resources and also some information about how you can contact the governance team.

Okay. So let's move on. Public interest governance principles.

So I'm not going to spend very long on these, but I just wanted you all to be aware of the fact that as a higher education provider registered with the Office for Students who are our regulator, we need to ensure at all times that we are abiding by the public interest principles.

And you can see, I won't run through all of them individually, but hopefully from glancing at those, you can get a sort of flavour of the way that we should be operating.

So we are held to account for delivering on these principles by the Office for Students, and it's Council's responsibility to make sure that we are complying with them at all times.

In terms of being committee secretary, I think the important thing is to just be aware that these exist and make sure that you are perhaps bearing them in mind when you're working with chairs on agendas and you're looking through papers and business for a committee as well.

So the other thing that I just wanted to flag because it's relevant to your roles is something called the Committee of University Chairs Code of Governance.

So this is a voluntary code that the University chooses to sign up to and having said that, I think most, if not all universities choose to sign up to the code.

You either sign up to it or you kind of explain why you're exempting yourself from certain elements of it. But we do sign up to it, and we sign up to all six elements that embody these values, which I'll just go through briefly now.

The first one is accountability. So this is making sure that Council ensures that the University is collectively responsible for the University's activities, and Council members are acting as a body as a whole in terms of their accountability for the institution.

Sustainability. So this is making sure the Council, for example, is working with the executive in setting our mission, strategic direction and overall aims at the University.

Reputation. So Council also is responsible for safeguarding our reputation and making sure that we can act with autonomy as a University as well. Finding that increasingly difficult in the current context, but that is still the responsibility of Council.

Also, we are committed to operating in line with principles of equality, inclusion and diversity.

So, for example, making sure that we are promoting a positive culture at the University and that we're supporting ethical behaviour at all levels.

We need to make sure that we're operating effectively. So making sure governance is robust, that it's agile and that it's not overly bureaucratic.

And then finally, engagement. So making sure that we're engaging globally, nationally, locally with all the various stakeholders in running the University.

So again, there's nothing specific as committee secretaries for you to do with these. It's just about generally being aware of these principles.

And we'll come back to some of these a bit further on in today's session.

So I won't run through all of these, but I just wanted to make you aware that these resources exist.

They're on our government's website, and I'll be sending you some resource links after this session so that you can find these.

Any questions about them, please always just get in touch. Okay. So let's move on to the role of the committee secretary.

So I'm going to do another poll. And if everyone wants to go back to that address that I sent before, just listed at the top there.

One question that I'd be really interested to hear your thoughts about is how many committees and groups do you think exist at the University of Sussex as of today?

So I'll just give you a couple of moments. It's very interesting, lots of similar numbers.

Monday's session had a much wider range of numbers than this so maybe you've all got the inside scoop on the number of committees here.

Okay. We got our first hundred. One person put too many on Monday. I don't blame them.

Great. Okay. Well, that's really interesting. Very interesting. Different answers to the session that I ran on Monday, possibly because we've got a professional services heavy audience today.

Thank you for those. I'm going to move on now. Well. I don't have a drum roll sound, I'm afraid, but I will give you the answer.

So the strict answer at the moment is 137, and that includes all committees, all groups that are currently listed on Sussex Direct, which we'll come on to look at a bit later on.

However, there are definitely groups, hopefully not committees, that are not listed on Sussex Direct and that the Central Governance Team aren't necessarily aware of.

And that may be for very good reasons. There may be task and finish group, so they could be groups set up for very specific local reasons.

However, if any of those need to interface with our more senior committees and if we want to make sure that we're being joined up and operating in a connected way across the institution,

unless the central governance team has some sense of those, we can't help or support you as committee secretaries in running them, particularly when you want to move business onto to a higher level up the hierarchy.

So I don't really want to increase that 137 number particularly, and we'll be doing some work on rationalising that. But this is, I guess, an excuse for a plea to just say, please let us know and please make sure you're using Sussex Direct if you are setting up a committee and we can help with that.

Okay. So this isn't all 137 committees, but it's a good swathe of them. And what this is here for is to give you an indication of how some of our higher-level committees of Council and Senate fit together.

So I won't talk through this in detail. What I wanted to just show you is kind of how it all fits together at the top level.

So we've got at the very top of the slides, you've got Council there who are our senior governing body and then effectively and in line with our charter and statutes, what Council does is it delegates its powers down through a committee structure which is here.

So it dedicates its powers to have academic oversight to Senate. And then below Senate, you'll see that there are a number of subcommittees to Senate, some of which you may well be committee secretaries for.

And then there's even another layer down there. So University Education Committee then subdivides into various other areas too.

On the left-hand side, you can see subcommittees of Council, so Audit and Risk, Capital Programs, Chairs Committee.

I won't go into explain what those are, but what you do have through our resources section and on our website is an explanation of what all of those committees do and their terms of reference if you ever want to look them up.

And then on the right-hand side are committees and groups that fall under the purview of the Vice Chancellor. So the obvious one there is University executive group or UEG, which is effectively an advisory group to the Vice Chancellor in making decisions.

We also have ELG, Executive Liaison Group, which is our interface, one of our interfaces with the Students Union and Capital Projects Executive Board as well.

So that's just a quick overview of some of our main committees but there are many, many more, and I'm sure you're involved in many of those.

So obviously, as committee secretaries, one of your key roles will be working with your committee chair. And I just wanted to touch on how that works and what the role of the chair should be.

So a chair really should be there to be able to transmit and embed within a committee the values of the University.

So integrity, kindness, etc., and making sure that those are embedded in a way that means that the committee runs well.

I'm sure many of you have experienced that conflict can arise as part of a committee, hopefully not physical conflict, because something's really gone wrong then, but there's likely to be a range of views and difference of opinion,

and that's okay because what a chair should be able to do is allow a committee to disagree in the right way because in the end, if we don't have good discussion and scrutiny, then effectively we're not really upholding our fundamental governance values.

So we're at risk of having a sort of passive governance if we're not having committee members scrutinise and challenge what comes there.

However a chair's role is to make sure that challenge is appropriate and expressed in the right way and that the committee is able to come to a decision nonetheless at the end of it.

And a chair, if they're doing it correctly, will be able to do that by drawing on the different expertise and areas of strength across the different members of the committee.

And your role as committee secretary is really supporting a chair in doing that. So understanding perhaps where members' particular strengths lie.

And one of the questions, really good questions, I got on Monday's session was, well that's fine, but what happens if - I was talking in particular about the fact that as a committee we're talking about collective decision making,

so you may have disagreement at a meeting, but in the end, if a decision is made, that whole committee and all its members are responsible for that decision.

So I got a really good question Monday, which is, "well, what happens when a member wants to make a point of minuting a specific fact that they disagreed and there's sort of two points to that if you've ever experienced it.

One, I think that's probably a signal that the chair isn't quite there yet in terms of getting the culture of the committee quite right.

So collective decision making should be something that the chair promotes and ensures everyone understands.

And then secondly, there's an issue there to do with how we would minute something and identify individuals, which I'll come onto separately a bit later on.

So in terms of working with chairs, hopefully you're all pretty familiar with some of this, but I'm just going to recap quickly. It sounds obvious, but the more that you can work in advance and plan in advance with the chair, the better.

So one thing that you could and I would really recommend is thinking just before the beginning of an academic year, can you sit down with your chair and think about a work plan for the coming year?

So there's likely to be with most committees in most groups, a sort of standard cycle in the year where you know that certain things are going to have to come to certain meetings.

And it's really helpful if you map that out so that you can talk through that with your chair. You can agree some deadlines to set for paper authors so that you can, you could even give them those deadlines at the beginning of the year.

This isn't to say that you can't then adapt the agendas and that you can't adapt to new business as it comes up. But what it does do is it gives you a structure to hang everything around.

And I would also highly recommend you take that workplan to the first meeting of each academic cycle so that your members are also aware of what's going to be coming up for the rest of the year. So also think about timings.

Working with a chair, you as a committee secretary may be a gatekeeper and a collector of all sorts of requests for things to go to a committee, but your role will be a really important one in thinking about,

well, can we actually get through all of that business in the time that's available for a meeting?

Do we need to have a separate meeting? Is there a big item of business that we need to have an additional meeting to cover?

Those are all the sorts of questions that you should be working with your chairs on doing.

So terms of reference and the composition, I really, really encourage you to look at them and understand what your terms of reference are for your committee or your group.

If you don't have any terms of reference for your committee or group, I would recommend getting some drawn up as quickly as possible, and we can help you in the Governance team in doing that as well.

It's really helpful for the committee secretaries to have a good understanding of both the terms of reference, which is effectively what the committee is there to do and how, and the composition.

The composition is basically what sets out who can be a member of that committee. Because sometimes questions come up in a meeting about, is this something for us?

Is it something for another committee? What's happening with a member that's about to come to the end of their term of office?

It's your role to be able to help the chair in thinking through solutions to those.

What we hold centrally is something called the organisation of the University and that sets out all of the terms of reference for all of the committees that we know about, and anyone can access those.

Most importantly of all, if you don't take anything else away from this section on chairs, my takeaway point is to just please try and build a positive working relationship with your chair.

Get to know them, get to know how they like to work. How much time in advance do you need to be working with them to think through an agenda?

Hopefully you're all already very well embedded with your chairs, but sometimes chairs change or committee secretaries change.

I would suggest just thinking about how you can build that working relationship with them, and then with any luck, the rest will flow from there.



So I'm going to move on to talk a bit more about agendas now. I'm going to talk about the type of business at meetings, and then I'm going to talk about how agendas can categorise that business.

You're probably familiar with how to draw up an agenda, and agendas might look slightly different depending on what committee you're doing. And we'll come on to look in just a second at examples of agendas so that we can flesh this out a bit more.

So generally speaking, you'll probably find that in terms of the items of business at committee or a group will generally fall into these three areas.

The first one is business, which is for compliance.

So this is about the tick box element of making sure that we are complying with requirements, our external requirements primarily, as a University and making sure that any returns that we're doing are fit for purpose and cover all of those areas of compliance that we need to do.

So this is kind of fairly bread and butter, fairly straightforward. You usually shouldn't need a huge amount of time spent on it but it is very important to do.

Very important that a committee scrutinises it. So examples that I've given of these are things like when we may need to make returns to the Office for Students, our Regulator, Health and Safety Reports or perhaps funding returns.

So the second area is strategy and risk. So these are items of business that are looking at how we deliver the University strategy. They can be for decision or they could just be for noting.

But they're broadly there to make sure that we are able to get on day to day with running the University alongside its overall strategic framework.

And they could take a variety of different forms, some of them a bit more high-level than others.

So reports on how the student experience is running, how the NSA's satisfaction survey outcomes are, what our employment strategies are, our people strategies are, or anything to do with how we're developing our estate.

And then the final area is anything related to governance. So this is kind of the more functional side of running committees and governance, like elections.

Reports from committees below your one or anything that we need to do in terms of changing our University regulations, so effectively our rule book as a University.

So then how this looks on an agenda, well this isn't a requirement for agendas, but I'm going to show you in a moment an example of what this looks like.

Generally, when structuring an agenda, you might want to think about it in terms of these three broad areas. Usually with an agenda, we'll start off with a procedural items area.

So this will cover things that you would expect on pretty much every agenda.

So it would be things like apologies from people that are absent, and matters arising which come from the minutes and also any chairs items.

So items that the committee chair wants to bring up that aren't covered elsewhere on the agenda. So that's the procedural section.

Then there's usually a decision or discussion section. So these are items which normally require committee members to make a decision, or they might just need to discuss something before coming to a conclusion.

So these, so any papers associated with these types of business should normally have a recommendation with them which asks members to either approve something or consider something.

I'll come on to what those mean in a second.

Then you have items which are for information or for noting. So these are effectively just making committee members aware of its contents. Usually and hopefully, you shouldn't need to discuss them.

But if you do, it's primarily just to get some clarification about the contents of them.

And these papers usually come with a recommendation to note. So yes, as I've said already, what I recommend is this is quite a useful structure for shaping and structuring your agenda.

Even if you don't put these as headers on your agenda, it's a useful way to think about it when you're just looking at the sequencing of items and perhaps grouping of them.

So I mentioned there about approve - consider - note, and these are some descriptors which explain a bit more about what they mean as a recommendation.

So every paper that comes to every committee should have a really clear recommendation, and you can do that by using the cover sheet template, which I'll include in the resources after this.

At the end of that cover sheet, you're asked to put a recommendation, and that's where you, I say you, that's where the paper author needs to think very carefully about what they're asking committee to do.

As a committee secretary, one of the most useful things you can do is review papers and think about the recommendation.

Is it really the right recommendation for what the committee's being asked to do?

So if a committee is being asked to make a decision, then they should be being asked to approve something, generally speaking.

And one of the key things to bear in mind with that is, what you should be pushing paper authors to do is where particularly they are coming with a whole set of different options or scenarios,

you should be expecting a paper author to come with a recommendation to follow one of those specific options based on their own professional expertise.

Because what that does is it really helps committee members work with something rather than be confronted with a list of options and be asked to pick one.

What we need is for paper authors to come forward with their own professional recommendation. A consider recommendation is generally where you're asking a committee to think over an issue.

It might feed into a wider piece of work.

You don't need a decision, but you might be, this might be a shaping stage for a piece of work where you need to consult on something that might be quite complex or might need to draw on different opinions.

The final one is to note, and like I said before, that's really for something, that's for information, and it shouldn't be anything that requires action as well. So making it very clear what they are being asked to understand, and that should normally not really require much discussion either.

So I just mentioned about one of the responsibilities of working with paper authors. Now I know that this can be quite a tricky thing to do because you're effectively a middle person between paper authors and a committee and a chair.

And that can be quite a tricky position to be in a lot of the time. However, just as it is with working with chairs, relationships are really key.

So you will probably get to know that you've got a handful of really key contributors to committees.

They might be committee members themselves or they might be people that aren't on the committee, but they write a lot of papers for it.

If you get to know them, you'll probably get to notice how much, how they like to work, how much notice they need before a paper is due, whether you can check, you know,

at what point you can check in with them ahead of a meeting to make sure and offer advice about just quality checking that things like the cover sheet is completed properly.

So it sounds obvious, but like I said before about working in advance, give clear deadlines in advance, and if you can set a workplan up for the entire year, even better, because then you can provide those deadlines to paper authors well in advance.

What I would recommend, if it's not already something that you do, is please avoid using the deadline for papers to be published as the deadline for paper authors,

because you will need time to process papers to make sure that they're accurate, to make sure that it's presented in the way it needs to be.

I said about before about paper deadlines for the rest of the year. Please make sure that we have a cover sheet template for all papers that come along as well. And I can show you what that looks like a bit later.

One thing that tends to happen with cover sheets is that you find that understandably, paper authors go back to a previous paper and then they just adapt it for whatever is needed now and send it to you.

That's fine in most cases, but what that risks is that you end up with legacy versions of the cover sheet, and that means it doesn't include all of the fields that we require on there.

So just be aware that when you're receiving something, just make sure it's using the latest cover sheet template.

So Matt's just asking what the paper deadline is for a committee, is it a week before the committee meets? Yeah. Thanks, Matt.

As a general rule, yes. We normally work to publishing papers a week ahead of the actual meeting of the committee. Obviously, if you can publish it even further in advance, fantastic.

If you can't publish it a week before the committee meets, then I would recommend acknowledging that with members and explaining when you expect to publish them so that you can manage expectations.

There are some specific rules around this, particularly for Senate, but for most of you, you probably don't have any specific reference to this in your terms of reference. So I would work with a week.

Yeah. And so papers themselves should be 2 to 3 pages, ideally. Some of them just won't be. Some of them just can't be. But as a general rule, most papers can actually be consolidated down to 2 to 3 pages for the front section.

And then it's fine to have appendices with those as well. But the thing to bear in mind with appendices is that they should only really be there to support the understanding of the front section of the paper.

So if a committee member comes to a paper and they have to refer to an appendix to be able to make a decision or be able to meaningfully feedback on something, then that means that information shouldn't be in an appendix, it should be in the front portion of a paper.

As committee secretaries, this is something that I would suggest you just be aware of.

And as you build up relationships with paper authors and your chair, I would perhaps just spot issues like this. And perhaps as part of your regular check in with chairs ahead of a meeting, you might want to flag issues like this.

And then finally recommendations. I think I've already said this, recommendations should be clear. There should be one recommendation to approve.

It shouldn't be a list of options where members are asked to pick and choose between them.

So we've got a couple of minutes before we go for a quick break. And I just wanted to have a look at some example agendas and papers.

So if you bear with me just a second. Right. So hopefully I should be screen sharing that. So this is an example amended UEG agenda, which I'm just trying to zoom in for. There we go.

I wanted to show you this because this follows quite what I think is quite a useful template for agendas. Now your agendas might not look like this. And like I said before, that's fine.

They don't all have to look like this. But if you want to think about how to structure an agenda, this is quite a useful template to use.

So you've got, like we said before, we talked about procedural items, those are here at the top and they cover the usual things that you would expect.

UEG calls its 'matters arising' an action tracker, but you might just have matters arising there.

And I'll show you a bit later an example of an action tracker as well, if you want one.

And so then like I said before, the first thing to do, the first substantive set of items should be any items which are there for approval or sometimes consideration. Excuse me.

So in this example, what we've got is the first item is, is something to agree. It's a draft agreement with the University.

And the other thing to notice in here is that I've put in that someone who isn't a committee member is due to come and attend the committee for this.

So you might also have this where you have guests come in for specific items. That's absolutely fine.

It's probably a very good idea to do that because it really helps bring something to life for committee members.

But the thing to do is to just be very clear at the outset that that's happening, and it's also helpful to think about that in terms of timing too.

So then here you've got some proposals that would come in relation to staff and students and you can see that this is an example where you've perhaps got a broad headline and then you've got two papers which relate to that on different elements.

And you can see here where we've identified that there are different papers. We've got something else here which is for approval and we've got someone else attending too, and then we've got another item here as well.

So on this agenda, what UEG does is identify who's leading, who's speaking on each particular item, and that's done using initials.

That may not be necessary for your committee. And that's absolutely fine. But it's one thing that you can consider to make it really clear.

On the right-hand side over here, you'll see that there are times as well.

So, again, this isn't essential and this might be something that you want to put on what's called an annotated agenda for your chair.

And I'll show you an example of that in a second. Then this section we've talked before, information assurance. This is where we've got items which shouldn't need to be discussed.

And you can see here that there's an explicit recognition of that as well.

So what this is saying is that any of these items that have a star next to them, the expectation is that they don't need a discussion, but if you do want to discuss them, members are expected to flag it with the chair in advance.

In reality, it doesn't quite work as neatly as that, but what it does do is it gives everyone an indication where we need to be spending the majority of our time in this section.

And then finally you've got some, in this example, you've got some standing items, which are the things that would be considered at every meeting.

So this is just a useful way of thinking about how to structure agenda items into those three broad categories. And you're very welcome to adapt this if that's something that you would find useful.

I'm going to show you now a slightly different example, and that's a Senate agenda.

The Senate, for various reasons, works in a slightly different way. But what you'll see here is that you've still got the same broad categories.

You've got procedural matters at the top. You've got matters for decision and discussion here. And then a bit further down. You've got things to note.

So although it looks a bit different, it's effectively working in the same way.

The other thing to notice that's different about this is that you've not only got the item name, but you've got a specific direction to the committee members about what they're supposed to be doing with that item.

And that's quite helpful in some cases because you're being really explicit about what you're supposed to do.

You've also got a reference to the specific paper over here, and that's the reference that should be the same as the one on Sussex Direct.

So just a slightly different way of doing things that I just wanted to make you aware of.

A third example very quickly is kind of at the opposite end of the spectrum, but perfectly fine for what it is, what it's doing. So this is a very simple agenda.

And I just wanted to show you this because you don't have to have agendas that look overly complicated or very complex.

If you've got a straightforward group of people with a straightforward set of business, then this is absolutely fine for an agenda.

You don't need to make overly complicated. And then finally, before we go, before I show you some papers, this is what I mean when I talk about an annotated agenda.

So an annotated agenda is really useful for chairs because it basically gives them a bit of a set of crib notes to run the meeting from. And an annotated agenda is something that a committee secretary should draw up for the chair.

It's perhaps not necessary for every meeting, but where you've got a complex agenda, where you've got some complex papers, this is really helpful to do.

So in this example, what you've got are apologies listed for the chair, and then a bit further down you've got this example of noting some various things that happened as a result of the minutes.

So this just gives a bit of background about some matters arising from the minutes of the chair. You'll see over here that you've got some specific times given and you've also got the specific pages that things relate to.

So it makes it really easy for the chair to just focus on managing the meeting itself rather than thinking about what we're supposed to be doing with each item.

So again, this is not compulsory, but I really, really recommend thinking about how you might draw up an annotated agenda with your chair.

So I'm not going to spend a huge amount of time, because we're running short on time, on papers themselves.

But what I'm going to do is, I'm going to make sure that in the resources section after this meeting, you've got some examples of papers in terms of what a decision paper looks like, what an assurance paper looks like, what a progress update looks like.

So that if you want to have a point of reference for good practice, you'll have those to look at.

The only thing that I will show you from there, though, is matters arising. So this is an example of a Senate action tracker effectively, which is also called matters arising.

And you can use this template if you want for your meetings too. So very simply, what it does is it just records the date that an action was recorded.

You might have a meeting reference, but you don't have to and you might have a specific reference to the minutes. But again, you don't have to do that.

You've got the action described here, in as much detail as you need to just be able to remember what exactly everyone's supposed to be doing. You've got it allocated to someone here and then you've got any notes here.

So for example, you might come back to it in a few months' time and decide that it's still underway. And you might want to put that note in there. And then over here, you just have confirmation that the action is still open.

If an action has been completed in between a meeting, then you would know that by working with the chair and working with paper authors in between meetings.

And that would mean that you can close something off.

So in this example, what's happened is that this particular report has been finalised, and we know that's happened. And what you've done working with the chair is you've closed this action off.

So this is reporting back to Senate that that action is closed. And then for the following meeting, this would just disappear from the matters arising completely.

So I'll put this in the resources section and please feel free to use it if that's something that you'd find useful in tracking things.

So I'll include these slides in the resources afterwards. And these are basically just recapping on some of the things I've already mentioned about work that happens in between meetings.

And also just recapping some points here about practical things to do with what happens if you're running a meeting remotely.

Also, like I mentioned before about terms of reference and bringing them back to the first meeting of the year.

And just generally in terms of making sure that you're gathering apologies, etc. There is something, you see that bullet point on voting there,

I suggest that if you have any particular asks about voting, or that you think it might come up as an issue for your particular committee, get in touch with me and I can help you with that.

The short version of this is avoid voting wherever possible because it shouldn't be necessary to vote in a committee.

But if you absolutely have to, and there are certain scenarios where that might be appropriate, then feel free to get in touch with me and I can help you, guide you through that process.

So we've had that ten-minute break and we're going to talk about some minutes.

And what I'm just going to do is make sure that I've got the chat showing again so that I can see if you've got any questions.

Okay. So what are the minutes? They are effectively an official record of the University's business.

So they're a really important record and they need to be as short as possible and they need to be to the point of what's happened in the meeting.

And they're really there to record a flavour of the discussion and any decisions made by the committee.

So that means that they're not intended to be some kind of parliamentary Hansard record of everything that was said in a committee, because generally speaking, that's really not necessary, and it's particularly not necessary for most University committees.

We'll come back to what recording a flavour of the discussion actually means because obviously it's open to interpretation and anything that's open to interpretation kind of puts pressure on you as committee secretaries to do that interpretation.

So we'll come back to that in a moment.

One thing that I would emphasise though, about when you're trying to pull the minutes together, you want to be aware that whilst you want to give some context and you want to give some flavour of the discussion that was had a committee,

what you need to be mindful of though is, in making those decisions, not to give any undue weight to any particular points when it's really not necessary to do so.

So, for example, if a committee member starts going off perhaps on what's effectively a bit of a tangent in that they want to query the definition of a particular term or a definition of something that's in the papers, and if that's resolved at the meeting itself,

that's probably an example that isn't worth recording in the minutes because it's kind of something that's gone off at a tangent.

I'm happy to talk about that in more detail in a moment, but I just wanted to give you a sense of what it means by flavour of the discussion versus everything that was said at a meeting.

And one of the other things that it's useful to do is to make sure that the headings in minutes, so how you're structuring the minutes, ties entirely to how things are structured in the agenda

because in weeks, months, years to come, some poor person needs to come back to these minutes and try to find a specific part of it.

And if they can't navigate it compared to what it says on the agenda, then they're going to have a really difficult time doing that.

So very simple solution to that is making sure that you're structuring your minutes with exactly the same title as something has on the agenda. There's also, as with an agenda, a useful standard format for minutes. Now this is a recommendation.

You don't have to use the exact same format for every single committee or group. However, there are certain elements which are useful to have in there.

And those elements are things like setting out the paper or the paper number that the committee received. So it's really clear if there is a paper, there might not be, which paper it refers to.



Then providing a short bit of contextual information to just be able to guide the reader as to why this item was being considered by the committee.

Because you need to always think in terms of if I was someone that had no experience in this committee and I picked these minutes up, would I have a fighting chance of understanding what was going on here?

Then you need to record some of the key points of the discussion.

There may have been no discussion at all if something was very straightforward, if something was, for example, to note. But usually there's a bit of discussion, and that comes back to what I was saying before.

It's about, as you gain experience, you'll have a better understanding of what are the key points of the discussion and the most relevant ones to record, rather than feeling under pressure to record absolutely every point that everyone made.

And that is a difficult skill that like a lot of things with the committee secretary, it's more of an art than a science. And it is something that over time you'll probably get a bit more confident about.

But as with all of this, if you're ever a bit of a loss for or a bit stuck with something, please get in touch with us, and we can always help in the governance team.

And then finally you want to come to the conclusion or the decision was on that item.

So it may have been a decision item and they may have had to approve something, in which case you want to record that that was approved at that meeting.

They might decide not to approve it, in which case you need to record that as well and any subsequent action that was taken as a result of that.

So they might have requested, for example, to see the paper in an updated format at the next meeting, and that would be an action that you record using, for example, the action tracker I showed you earlier.

So I thought it would be useful to bring that to life a little bit more. What I'm just going to do before I get blinded, I'm just going to, if you could just give me one second, I just need to pull a blind over.

Sorry about that. Okay.

So this is a formula, for want of a better word, that I use, that I find quite helpful when I'm thinking through minutes and I thought I'd share with you because you can use it if you like to think about how you might structure your own minutes.

So when you have an item for business, what I like to think about for the first part of a minute is, like I said before, thinking about what was the context, why were they considering this?

Excuse me. So you might want to start that with members considered a paper setting out and then what it was. And I'll show you in a second a full example of what that means.

You might then want to move on to start thinking about some of the key points that surfaced from particularly that paper.

So it would say, one way to do that is you could say it was noted that.

And then particularly if you have someone speaking to a paper, you would probably capture there some of the key things that they wanted the members to be aware of as part of that paper.

Then you'd move on to that thing that I was talking about before about capturing the flavour of a discussion. So one way to start that is to say in discussion, the following points were amongst those made.

So you're not saying that these were the most important points necessarily. You're just saying that these are the ones that you're observing for the minutes.

You might then want to capture a bit of some of the significant acknowledgements that were made by the committee members. So there might be some complications to do with it.

Or there might be some extra contextual information that surfaced as part of the meeting that wasn't obvious at the beginning. And in that case, you could say it was acknowledged that, and then you would give that additional bit of information.

And then what you would do, you would come through to the conclusion. So what happened as a result of this? Well, in this case, members approved.

And then you would want to refer to the specific recommendation that's put on the front of the committee paper.

So what does that look like kind of in reality?

Well, I've chosen to focus on the very important topic here, which is the University supply of delicious cakes on campus.

If you're involved in a committee, by the way, that's talking about delicious cakes on campus, I'd like to know about that because that's one that I'd want to be involved in.

But what I've done here is I've fleshed out what that might look like in terms of a full minute. So you can see there that the first sentence is just outlining exactly what was coming to the committee. It's very brief.

It just says that this paper was outlining future delivery models for cake supply on campus.

And then you've got something there, which was the yellow bit, is perhaps what the paper was drawing attention to or perhaps what the paper presenter wanted to bring to the attention of the committee.

It then moves on to say, well, when the committee members started discussing this, they noted these things. And there you've got an indication of the sorts of things that might come up as part of that discussion.

So then the red bit, this is an example of where perhaps these weren't necessarily obvious from the outset in the paper, but they were things that were raised as part of the committee's consideration.

So in this case, it was about some of the risks or costs associated with changing that supply. And then finally you've got a record of the actual decision.

So in this case, it's approving the approach to reviewing the University's cake making services.

So it's a tongue in cheek example, but hopefully you can get a sense of how that formula translates into something that's real life.

And it's fairly succinct as well.

So there could be quite a lot of discussion as part of that but you'd want to think about really condensing it down as much as possible.

So let's have a quick look at some examples of minutes just to see what this looks like in real life. So I'm just going to switch over to share my screen.

So the first example we're going to look at is how minutes are recorded for UEG, and I've got an example of that to show you which I shall put on here. So this is a dummy example of UEG minutes.

So hopefully some of this will probably be fairly straightforward and obvious but just to recap, you've got a confirmation of who attended that meeting.

By the way, the thing that I would recommend doing for both agendas and minutes is to record, on all copies of it, who exactly is on the membership.

So in this case, you've got a list of all of the members and that list is done by their role, not their name. Because if someone leaves, the next person in that role will join the committee.

So this is a composition, not actually a list of members. So that means that when someone's looking at this, they can tell who was there in terms of the actual people rather than roles.

And then who sent apologies, so who wasn't there? It records who noted the meeting. And in this case, it also records any guests that came along to the meeting. And it gives you an indication of what item they're there for.

You don't have to do that but it comes back to the transparency principle that we were talking about earlier.

So as with the agenda, this particular example is done in a tabular form, and if you were looking for a template to use and you hadn't really got any minutes to work from as an example, I think this would be quite a good starting point if you wanted to adapt this.

So as you can probably see, it's fairly straightforward. It records what the item was, and if you remember this should record exactly what was listed on the agenda. It records who led the discussion.

In this case, it's initials but you could type the full name. This is where you have the minutes itself.

So this is effectively a summary of what the committee discussed using the formula that I mentioned before, and this is the one that I was showing you just a second ago.

So this was a decision item. And then over on this right-hand side, what this particular template does is it separates the outcome into a separate field.

So this is also part of the minute, but what it does is it just separates it for easy reference later on what the outcome of a decision was. And you can see here how that divvies up.

It's not necessary to structure these with decision headings with information, for information etc., with procedural. But it is right to do it in the order that they were listed on the agenda.

So that's an example, as well so that you can adapt that for using if that's something that you think is going to be useful.

And then the second example I wanted to show you was a set of Senate minutes, which are done in a different way and are a more formal approach to minutes.

So I just wanted to give you this as an example of how they're done for a more senior committee. And as before, in there and you've got them separated into their general groups of the composition.

You've got apologies down here. You've then got the minutes reviewed from the last meeting and you've got any matters arising. And those matters arising were driven by that template I showed you earlier where it tracks all of those actions.

And what's happened here is that someone's recorded the discussion or the updates as part of that action tracker.

Now, the main thing that I wanted to show you is the fact that you'll notice this is structured or presented slightly differently from the UEG example I showed you just now.

Obviously, it's not in the tabular form, it's structured by effectively paragraph, but it still follows the broad overall approach of having a minute and then having a decision further down. But what I wanted to show is the way that that particular minute is broken down.

So let me get to a later example, which is a bit easier. This shows the agenda heading, which in this case is an update on the education and students portfolio. Then this section, this is called received.

And what this does is it explains what papers were received as part of this section of the agenda. So in this case, there were five separate papers. And what this does is it just simply lists what the papers are.

Then, bit further on, what happens is that the minutes are recorded of the discussion.

So this is, again, a flavour of the discussion that surfaced from those papers, and you'll see that these aren't separated out into the individual items or papers themselves.

It's treated as a broad discussion around all five papers, and that's particularly helpful where you've got papers that interrelate with each other, where the discussion might naturally weave in and out of different elements of it, and where they're all generally under the same broad theme.

In this case, it's education and students. So you've got a record of the discussion there. Quite a few minutes there because there were a few papers involved.

And then what you've got next is a resolved section. So this is where you record the decisions that are being made on the back of that discussion.

So in this case, there were three decisions made. Three approvals made. And then the final section here is action.

So given that those three decisions were made, what do we need to do next? And this records the action. And these actions are things that could go in the matters arising tracker for the next meeting.

So I just wanted to show you this because it's a slightly different way of doing minutes. Both are completely fine. Both are different for good reason.

But I just wanted to give you a sense of two different ways that you can approach it. Both of them will be in the resources pack, so you can have a closer look at them later.

And obviously just let me know if you've got any questions about them. Okay. So I'm going to switch back to carry on with the slides. And we're going to do our final section now, which is looking at how you manage committee information online.

So if you're not already familiar, Sussex Direct is the University's platform for managing a range of information about staff and students and publishing it for everyone to access via our website.

One of those sections of information is the committee section, and that provides a list of all the committees that we know about. All of the ones the committee secretaries maintain.

And it lists all of the papers that are associated with each meeting.

And this is really helpful because this helps us uphold the transparency principle of governance in that it gives all staff, regardless of whether or not they're a member of a committee, access to committee, business and decision making.

One of the roles of the committee secretary is to maintain this information. And that's what I'm going to show you how to do in a moment.

One of the questions that I get is, well, what Sussex Direct for if we have this thing called Board Packs. Well, Sussex Direct is essentially something that's there for all staff to access via the web.

Board Packs, if you know about it, you may not, is a platform that we use to support UEG, Council, Senate and its subcommittees, particularly for its members to help handle and review papers for meetings.

So if you hear Board Packs mentioned, it's not necessarily something that you need to work with.

What you definitely need to do as a committee secretary, regardless of what committee it is, is work with and publish information to Sussex Direct.

And then finally, I just wanted to say that I'm aware that understandably, people use Box for working with papers, for preparing them, for collaborating on them.

Box really shouldn't be used to distribute papers, though, for University committees, and that's because it undermines that transparency principle.

If you do it that way, you're only going to be distributing those papers or making them accessible to committee members.

You're not going to be able to make them viewable to staff elsewhere as well. There may be very valid reasons why you don't want other staff to access papers, and that's okay.

We can come on to what those reasons are. But that has to be a deliberate decision, rather than just by nature of convenience of working with Box.

So I got a question from Lindy. Are steering groups supposed to be lodged on Sussex Direct? I think it depends. The answer to a lot of this, I think you'll find, is it depends. It's quite a good get out clause for me.

It depends, is the answer though. I guess I would probably, if you're thinking of a very specific example that you want to contact me about, Lindy, I can help advise whether it's something that really needs to be up there or not,

because without a bit more context, it's a bit tricky to tell, but I'm happy to help with a specific example offline.

I mean, one thing I would say is that if there are major decisions being made as part of it, I would expect it to be feeding into other committees anyway, in which case it sounds like it's a bit more of a working group than what we would traditionally call a committee.

Probably not something that we would put on Sussex Direct but, you know, please do let me know what the example is and we can, we can work through that one. Yeah.

Okay, thanks. So to manage Sussex Direct, you've got to use CMS, which is also called yellow screens.

And I'm afraid it comes with a bit of a health warning because as wonderful as yellow screens is, it is a system that's been designed, I think it started in the nineties, and it hasn't really been updated to reflect how that information is being managed these days.

It will be, but it is a fairly antiquated system. It does a brilliant job of what it's supposed to do, but it means that it's not the most intuitive system to use.

And for that reason, I'm not going to be able to, in the next 50 minutes or so, give you a really in-depth bit of training about how to use this.

However, what I can do is point you in the direction of how you get set up.

So what I'm about to show you requires you to have done a bit of work at the outset to make sure that you can access your committee's information on Sussex Direct, if indeed it is something that needs to be on Sussex Direct.

So the prerequisites are that you need to have permission and access to use CMS or yellow screens, and you need to have been given access to a specific screen which is called Groups Maintenance.

And I've got the, the short code for it there.

To do that, you need to go to ITS and ask for permission to access it, and that involves filling in a very short form which will then be pinged to your line manager to give permission for you to access that.

Once you've got that, you need to make sure that you're using Microsoft Edge because it's currently the only browser that will allow us to use our antiquated system, and it needs to be set up to be compatible with using our system.

And I've put some brief instructions on how to do that in the resources folder that I'll send you a link to after this. That bit's not that complicated. It's just an extra step that you need to do.

And then the final thing is that you either need to be working on campus to access yellow screens, or you need to be connected to it remotely via the staff VPN.

I would just recommend waiting to be on campus, to be honest, because even the setting up of staff VPN requires a separate process in itself. However, ITS can help you with that, and they will be able to provide you with some separate guidance.

Because though this is something that generally speaking, you'll only have to do intermittently in terms of managing this information, I would recommend waiting until you're on the campus network.

So let's just walk through how this actually looks in practice. And I'll also show you what Sussex Direct looks like too, in case you're not familiar.

Bear with me a second. Share my screen. Okay. Let's go to here. So this is Sussex Direct. Am I sharing that with everyone? No. How about now? Yeah. So this is Sussex Direct. It's [direct.sussex.ac.uk](http://direct.sussex.ac.uk).

Hopefully you should have seen it before. At the top here, you'll see that you've got this searches dropdown, and you'll see under searches, you've got a section called committees.

If you click on committees, you'll get a list of the 136 committees that we have currently registered at the University. And you can scroll through these and get a sense of how they group.

There's quite a large group of school level committees here. They make up quite a large section and you'll see that they're all roughly, all schools should have roughly the same committees in them.

So you've got quite a large school section there, but above and below that, you'll find you've got all the other committees in there too.

If you click on a particular committee, you'll go into a list of its membership.

And just note, when you're looking at membership that you've got these buttons down here, which if you're not seeing everyone, it's because they're not all being shown.

And you'll see the way that they're grouped into their compositions. So what role are they playing on the committee? Who they are, their position, and their start and end date.

They may not have an end date but they should do if it's a specific term listed in the composition. And then a bit further down, you'll find where individual meetings are listed against the individual papers.

So in this case, you'll see that we've got all of the papers for the 1st of April Council meeting. You'll see that some papers have got a grey icon next to them, and that means that they're available to all staff at the University, regardless of whether they're a committee member or not.

And then you'll see that some of them have got red logos against them. And that means that it's restricted just for access by committee members. And the cover sheet template explains in which cases we would restrict things and in which cases papers would be open.

So this is essentially the information that you are controlling via yellow screens.

So to open up yellow screens, assuming you've done all of the prerequisites before.

Assuming you've covered all of those prerequisites that I listed in the other slide, what you're doing is going to the ITS section of our website.

You click on services, business applications, and you would find here, log into the database, and that's where you want to go to access yellow screens.

Once you do that, you should find that it starts firing up, fairly slowly. And then it'll start loading the database for you.

He says with immense confidence. Here we go.

So it's just opened a separate window, which means I'm now going to go and switch to that window so that you can actually see what I'm doing.

This is what pops up in the window, and this is where you access Yellow Screens.

So I'm just going to log in. And then you'll be confronted with a list of different areas.

You probably won't see a list this long, but the thing that you will have access to if you've got the permissions granted to you, is this one called Groups Maintenance, which you click on.

And this is where you start to look for the committee that you want to be, that you want to work with. So in this case, what I'm going to use is, if I can remember the name of it. There we go.

So I'm not going to go through the detail of how search works, how all of the various elements of this works, because this could easily be a separate training session in itself.

But what I'm going to put in the resources section is a visual step by step guide on how to use this screen and what all of the different parts of it do so that you can come back to use it when you've actually got access to it, because there may be a gap between now and when you're accessing it.

What you would do though, once you've got access, you would look up your committee and then this is what you use to manage all of that Sussex Direct information that I showed you before.

So you've got a short group reference here. You've got a long name here, and this is the name that will appear on that Sussex Direct list of committees.

You've got a record here of which other committee it reports to. So in this case, this is an example of a committee that reports to UEG.

And then you're able to record any particular comments about it, and when the committee came into existence as well.

You would not normally have an end date to it, it's just that I want to make sure this disappears after the training. If you need to set up a committee on here, just get in touch with us and we can do that for you, so you wouldn't need to create one yourself.

We would do that for you, and then we would hand it over to you to maintain from there on in.

What you've then got here are a list of the members of a committee structured by the composition. So one of the first things to do is to make sure that you've got the composition set right.

And what this does is it means that you can add different roles. So we've got a chair. Every committee should have a chair.

In this case, for this particular committee, the chair is the head of governance services.

You tell it that you're only allowed one chair and that they're also someone that can vote. This is something called, so a doc person is basically someone that isn't a member of a committee but might be a secretary or an admin that helps upload papers to Sussex Direct.

So if you've got an example where you have perhaps as a committee secretary, you work with some colleagues who help you out managing papers and you just want someone to have access to Sussex Direct to upload them,

but you don't want their name to appear in the list of members, then you would call them what's called a doc person.

And then you've got here a particular type of member. In this case, the governance compliance assistant manager.



So then on this screen, what happens is that you're able to actually start adding people. So let's go. For example, let's say I noticed that we're missing someone and we need to add a new member. So you can insert using the button above.

You can say it's a member, and under that, you'll get a choice of what, it'll ask you what type of member?

You would then put in who it is, so let's say you put in the surname, and then this button here would allow you to do a quick look up, and it will open up a staff directory, and you would just pick from the list of people who you were looking for.

Click OK and it completes the rest for you. Then here, you just need to make sure that you've got their start date in, so this would be the date that you wanted to add them to the committee.

And then if you wanted them to finish at a certain time, you would have an end date, but in most cases, you can just delete that and leave it indefinite.

So if I were to save that. Yeah. It's just given me a warning that there's more than three people in that category, which is something that I deliberately just did.

If I then go back to Sussex Direct, I can show you that that will be showing on the list. Test. Test Committee for Governance Training. So this is what that committee looks like.

And there you can see that it's added Kelly in which is based on what I've just done. So it's an instant system. Once you save something on the screen, it'll instantly show over here. And you can also see here that the document person, the admin that's helping manage this committee, they're not listed.

Once you've set this up and once you, particularly as a secretary or a document person, you're set up on it, what you'll find is that down here, you'll have access to this upload document button, and this is where that you can start adding papers.

So if you click on here, it'll ask you to choose the file.

So I recommend that you upload papers in a PDF format. You don't need to worry about the URL bit.

You then associate that paper with a particular meeting. And you control the meetings from the yellow screens. You should be able to see that because I think I'm showing my entire screen.

You see this tab here, meetings, if you click on that, that's where you can add different dates of different meetings.

So I recommend that at beginning of the year, you put in all of your meetings for the rest of the year.

You then choose whether that's accessible to all staff, or you say it's actually something that I want to restrict because it's a sensitive or confidential paper.

You then say it's a paper, or you might be uploading an agenda, in which case you choose that. I wouldn't generally bother with many of the others apart from minutes.

You then give it a quick title. You can see here an example of other titles I've put in before. You might have a paper number, but you don't have to have a paper number.

The final thing you need to do is just give it an order. So if it's an agenda, it will be number one. And then from there on in, you want papers to go in a sequential order. And that's how you control that.

So I'm really sorry that that's a bit of a whistle stop tour, but all I wanted to do is to just give you a flavour of how yellow screens work, how it looks on Sussex Direct, and how the two interrelate with each other.

Like I said, I'm going to be giving you a link to a resources folder that includes guides on how to do that. And then unless it's about permissions and accessing yellow screens, feel free to get in touch with the governance team and we'll do what we can to help you with that.

I'm just going to stop sharing. And I think I've got a question in the chat. Oh, yeah, that's a good question, Matt.

If you're uploading documents to board packs, which is that platform we talked about earlier, do I need to Sussex Direct as well? I'm afraid the answer is yes.

Board Packs is not going to give access to staff across the institution to look at committee papers.

However, if you're talking about the sort of committee, I think you're talking about, those would not generally be, those would all be papers that are treated as sensitive or confidential,

in which case there's probably no need to go and then duplicate things on Sussex Direct as well because you're not adding anything more by doing that, because you are only giving access to committee members.

However for, let's say Senate or Council, we do duplicate between using Board Packs and also publishing things on Sussex Direct because it's really important that we're being transparent for papers that we are able to share with staff across the institution.

So I think we're kind of at the end of, we are at the end, which I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear. So that leaves us about 10 minutes now for any other questions that anyone's got.

Is there anything that you feel I've glossed over, or that I haven't covered that you'd like to ask about now?

So, Anna's put a question in the chat. What is the Sussex approach to recording running transcription for committees? [inaudible] accessibility with recordings deleted after minutes typed up.

So I'm guessing by that, Anna, you don't mean the live transcription feature of when we're working remotely. Is that basically recording and then typing up from a recording?

Anna: Yeah. So I'm used to just doing committees by MS Teams, I'm not used to Zoom at all as a platform.

And we were routinely recording our committees, and then it runs the live transcript and we had feedback for members who had hearing impairments or other accessibility issues, that they actually found it helped them engage with the committee in a better way.

That recording and transcription would be, as secretary, I would download it after the meeting and get it off the site, and then as soon as the minutes were typed, I'd just get rid of the recording altogether.

Sorry, that's my dog now barking at a squirrel.

But yeah, I sense that there's not any appetite for that here at Sussex and people might be a bit concerned about not being able to speak freely if they're being recorded.

James: Yeah, it's a real minefield, this one, as you've probably already picked up at Sussex.

And actually also thank you for the reminder about the transcript side of things because there will be a transcript on the recording for this session when anyone goes back to view this again.

As a general rule, I think the default position is that we don't record meetings, committee group meetings.

However, that doesn't mean that we can't, and if you're able to reach consensus with committee members, particularly working with the chair, that that is something that the people are comfortable doing.

And it's clear why and it's clear what will happen with the recording then by all means, do that.

There's no hard and fast rule about this, particularly if it helps you as a committee secretary, to make sure, you know, we've got a really accurate record further down the line.

And if it helps with accessibility, then absolutely, please, please do it.

The key thing is making sure everyone is supportive of it and everyone understands what will happen with that recording. And that's essentially the chair's responsibility.

So I've got another question. If I'm updating members in yellow screens, should I give them an end date or delete them? Yeah, that's a great question.

The answer is you should end date them, never delete them, because what happens if you delete things in yellow screens,

so let's say a member has resigned or a member has come to the end of their term, if you then delete them from yellow screens, we've basically lost an audit trail there of what date someone was part of a committee.

It's probably not the only record of that, but it's a very useful one. So on the yellow screen itself, if you remember, against each row, there was a start date and there was an end date.

Once you know that they're coming to an end date, and you can do this for the future, just put an end date in there. And that means that they will no longer appear in the list of members after that date.

And that will happen automatically once you set that date.

And so, Debbie asked, you mentioned that Box shouldn't be used. Current secretary of committee I'm taking over from uses both Box and Sussex Direct. Members prefer to access doc on Box. Presumably this is okay [inaudible] Sussex Direct.

Yeah, absolutely, I think that's fine. I completely recognise that Sussex Direct does a good job, but it is a bit of a pain. So as long as we're making sure that we are making things available on Sussex Direct to all staff, so we're upholding that transparency principle, then by all means.

If people find it easy to just have a box link and we're making sure that the two tie together, absolutely fine, no problem with that. Yeah.

Great question, Annie. How would you define a restricted paper? So that's a yep, fine, how would you define a restricted paper?

Well, that's on the committee paper template, and that's a really good excuse for me to quickly show you what is in the resources folder that I'm going to give you access to.

So in the resources folder, I will give you access to this, it's got a copy of the slides, which will also include a recording of the session as well.

It'll include some sample agendas for you to look at, some sample papers for you to look at. So you've got a decision-making example, assurance report example, etc. And that's the matters arising template I showed you before.

You've then got some examples of some minutes that I showed you earlier. And in here you've also got some links to both the service desk to request access to yellow screens. That's a shortcut that will open up the form that you can use.

You've also got how to open instructions on using yellow screens in Microsoft Edge. And then you've also got this. This is a step-by-step guide that I referred to earlier, which shows you how to use the yellow screens.

What isn't in there, which I thought was but I will add it, is the thing that I was just trying to do to answer your question about what's a restricted paper?

And one way to get to that is by going to, he says, again really confident. So you've got a whole load of information, most of which I've covered with you today on our GCGC web pages.

On the about committees part, so this is professional services, governance and compliance committees, about committees, you've got our paper template.

So the latest paper template will always be downloadable from here. And then I shall show you very quickly, in the last 2 minutes we've got, what that committee paper template looks like.

So this is a committee term paper template. It is just about to be updated.

So please just go back and download the latest version, if you ever need to. I'm not going to go through it row by row, but you'll get a sense from this what it includes.

And the other thing to notice is that at the bottom, it's also got a template for the papers themselves and how they should be formatted, which is really helpful.

So in answer to how do you know if something should be restricted, that's this status section. So what this is saying is that basically for pretty much all committees, you need to apply agreed principles on restrictions of papers.

Essentially unless something falls under these two categories here, a paper should be open and unrestricted and available to all staff.

So principle two is generally about where we have something that might be commercial in confidence.

It might need careful handling. It's in the developmental stage and not something that we are able to share at this point. It might really be related to sort of future strategy development before we've got to the consultation stage with the University community.

Principle three is anything that are, for example, draft minutes that haven't yet been approved by the committee.

Those generally shouldn't be shared with staff across the University because committee members haven't had a chance to endorse them yet.

Anything around interim financial monitoring. And you can see some other examples here. So that's the answer to what should be restricted and what can be open.

And then you'll see elsewhere you've got bits of guidance about filling in the other areas too.

Okay. So we're just about out of time. I'm just going to check if there's any other questions I haven't managed to get around to. I don't see any more.

Okay, well, look, it's 4 p.m. and it's Friday afternoon, and you've just spent 2 hours with me very patiently while I talk to you about the committee secretary role, which I really appreciate.

And thank you so much for all of you for coming along to this. I'll follow up with those resources, but please do get in touch with me or any member of the governance team.

I'll give you some contact links and just let us know when whenever you need some help, we're happy to. Otherwise, I hope you all have a nice weekend. Thanks very much.

(End of document)