

Time – saving at Lodge Meetings

The Provincial Grand Master has encouraged all Lodges to look at how time can be used efficiently at Lodge meetings in order to maximise enjoyment and avoid unnecessarily early starts or late finishes.

Whilst Lodges may regulate their own proceedings, there has been a tendency over the years to add ceremonial items and reports and, with the greater use of catering staff rather than Stewards, to extend the time taken at Festive Boards.

The Provincial Grand Master is keen to emphasise that there are very few protocols or traditions that are obligatory and with his approval the following suggestions are made. It is up to each lodge to consider whether they are appropriate to their needs and which, if any, they would like to take forward.

They may help to balance the needs of those who would like to start early and get home early with those who need to start later, perhaps because of work commitments, and are content to leave later.

The Meeting

1. Processions: Consider not having Processions at the beginning or end of meetings but possibly retaining them for Installation Meetings only.
2. Minutes: Pre-circulate the Minutes to all members by email and/or hard copy. Many lodges already do this, which has the added advantage that all members remain in touch.
3. Almoner's, Charity Steward's and other Reports: Pre-circulate these reports, with the Almoner and Charity Steward providing brief updates at the meeting.
4. Installation Meeting: Consider investing only new Officers individually. Those remaining in Office could be announced and stand with a court bow rather than being formally presented.
5. Salutations: consider minimising salutations (or even dispensing with them completely). Salutation to the most senior brother present alone is quite acceptable and to be encouraged.
6. Greetings: Where it is desired that the WM receive greetings, pre-arrange for these to be given collectively or alternatively that it is restricted to genuine visitors, i.e. not those who are Lodge Members.
7. Ballots: Grand Lodge does not differentiate between different types of 'candidate' and it is permissible to combine ballots for initiates/joiners but not honorary members, providing that any negative vote would have to be followed by separate ballots for each candidate. Consider leaving the ballot in the hands of the WM, SW and JW (or Principals) unless any member requests a formal ballot. There will need to be a formal proposition for this duly seconded and approved by the members (by a show of hands).

8. Sequence of Business: Consider dealing with administrative matters (eg Reports, Risings) at the beginning of the meeting. This will allow those who cannot get to Meetings early (e.g. because of work commitments) to join the Meeting before the Ceremony without disturbing the flow.

Festive Board

1. Pre-dinner Drinks: Consider restricting the amount of time for pre-dinner drinks. Pre-ordering can save a considerable amount of time.
2. Wine Taking: Consider minimising the number of Wine Takings. 3-4 is sufficient. Perhaps: PGM or his representative, WM's personal guests, those who assisted in the ceremony, recipient of an award or honour.
3. Toasts/Speeches: Consider restricting or reducing the number of Toasts. There is no requirement to have Toasts other than to the Queen & Craft and The Grand Master. A full Toast list could be reserved for special occasions. Ensure that those proposing and responding are instructed as to the length and content. Brevity is to be encouraged. There is no requirement to wait until the end of the meal. Toasts can be commenced as soon as Grace has been returned and before the catering staff have vacated the dining room. Their presence is incidental to the proceedings and the room does not need to be tyled.
4. Buffets: Consider having a buffet with a formal sit down meal at Installation Meetings and other special occasions. This can save time and help to reduce costs.
5. Timing: Establish and agree timings with the caterer including a finish time and stick to it.

Attendance of the Provincial Grand Master, Deputy or Assistant or the PGM's Representative.

The Provincial Ruler's each undertake several duties each week and travel widely. In order that they may leave at a reasonable hour, the Provincial Grand Master has decided that at Installation meetings and other formal occasions he and/or the other Rulers or his representative will retire from the Festive Board no later than 10.30pm.

The Executive are of the view that an Installation meeting should, in total, last no longer than 4.5 hours and other meetings 4 hours. The start time will therefore determine the hour at which the PGM will retire. For example, with a start time of 5pm, the PGM will leave an Installation at 9.30pm or an ordinary meeting at 9pm.

It will be for the Lodge to determine whether to plan to finish by this time or accept that the PGM etc will leave before the end.

RJ Ellis
Provincial Grand Secretary
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