

Susan Hoare  
Principal  
Aon



# The chair's role in making better scheme decisions

Aon recently carried out research with behavioural insight agency Behave London. The research aimed to help us better understand how group dynamics can impact broader decision-making and planning strategy – and how this can be applied to scheme trustee meetings.

One thing became very clear from the research: the way a meeting is chaired has a direct impact on the board as a whole, the decisions made and the effectiveness of those decisions. It also showed that although trustees are better than the general public at overcoming natural behavioural tendencies, errors in judgment are still apparent. The meeting chair can play a vital role in making sure these biases are avoided.

## **How can the chair ensure biases are avoided in meetings?**

There is an automatic 'authority effect' which comes with the role of the chair. The chair can use this authority to make the meeting a comfortable place for everyone; a meeting where it is acceptable to voice concerns, and – if necessary – to challenge the status quo and suggest change. Framing an issue in two different ways can make a drastic difference to how it is approached and answered. If the chair presents the agenda item as both an opportunity and as a threat, this encourages an inclusive approach.

One way may involve imagining the whole board has resigned and considering what new trustees would do. This can help everyone consider ideas afresh and without the hangover of decisions that have been made in the past.

All trustees can help to create a meeting in which everyone feels safe in expressing themselves and driving change. It is often down to the chair, though, to ensure that meetings take place within the right environment.

Aon has created its free 'Behavioural Checklist for Chairs' to help them to manage meetings more effectively.

The guide has tips on how to avoid behavioural biases when planning and chairing meetings – including advice on how to frame questions; behavioural traps to avoid; and ways to encourage constructive discussion and effective decisions.

**You can download your free copy of the checklist from [aonhewitt.co.uk/trustee-effectiveness](http://aonhewitt.co.uk/trustee-effectiveness).**

*Susan Hoare is a principal at Aon*