**The Minute Taker**

If the minute taker knows what he/she has to do before the meeting starts they are less likely to make mistakes, have to rewrite the minutes and are more likely to ensure that the critical points are recorded.

Minutes should include:

- Issues for discussion. It is important to include the issues that were discussed at the meeting even if there were no decisions taken about them. This ensures that they do not get lost and that it is easier to pick up later on these issues.
- Decisions. Decisions must be clearly noted so that everybody is aware of the decision and so that there is a written record. Human memory and human perception are notoriously unreliable and it is not productive for later meetings to be concerned with trying to come to a consensus on just what an earlier decision was.
- Actions. Record the actions that will happen as a result of the decision. Recording the actions allows you to check whether the actions have been followed through.
- Timelines. It is also important to indicate a timeline by which actions must be completed. This again allows you to check whether the action has occurred within the set timelines.
- Persons responsible for the actions. A person or group of people must carry out actions that flow from decisions. By recording this information in the minutes there should be little doubt about who is responsible. This allows for checking that the decision has been implemented. Far too often, organisations do not record this basic, yet vital, information and then spend unproductive time working out whether anything has happened – or not.

The sooner after the meeting the minutes are checked and reports made the greater the likelihood of accuracy as, over time we tend to forget things. It is important to send minutes out to meeting participants as soon as practical after the meeting so that they are reminded to action any items they are responsible for.