



Retaining members, preventing resignations

The issue of attendance at Lodge & Chapter meetings, and attempts to manage it, can be an emotive one. There are some Freemasons who take the view that Masonic meetings must always be a high priority and that members should manage their other commitments around them. There are others who accept that individuals can vary in their commitment to Freemasonry and that it is preferable to have in their membership, good people who cannot attend every meeting than not to have them at all. In either case, almost every Freemason will occasionally miss a Lodge meeting.

However, we know that resignation is often preceded by periods of absence, relative to the individual's normal pattern of attendance. Therefore, a break in pattern and diminishing attendance is a warning sign of possible issues, whether they relate to reduced interest, dissatisfaction or a change of personal circumstances. It therefore makes sense for Lodges & Chapters to monitor attendance and to make enquiries if absences vary or increase from their normal pattern.

Recommended good practice

Regular contact with non-attending members should occur in any case, no matter how many meetings are missed or whether apologies are registered.

Quite often there are undisclosed reasons for non-attendance. The following process has been found to be helpful and involves officers & members working together and is a suggested method of approach to be adopted

1. Using existing systems, the Secretary or Scribe maintains a record of attendance/absence at each meeting.
2. They send a copy of the record to the Mentor & Lodge Almoner shortly after each meeting.
3. The Almoner monitors long term patterns and trends with regard to member absences.
4. If a member is unexpectedly absent without submitting an apology, an agreed member i.e. Almoner, contacts them by phone.
5. The purpose of the telephone contact is to inquire about the member, their health and welfare, to offer assistance if appropriate and to express how the member was missed by the Brethren or Companions.
It is not to express disappointment in their absence or exert pressure. The member's needs motivate the call.
6. If a member has missed two consecutive meetings, whether with an apology or otherwise, an agreed person contacts them by phone within seven days of the second meeting.
7. The purpose of this contact is to identify any underlying cause for absence and in particular emerging disinterest or concerns held by a member. Compassion & support should underpin all.
8. Relevant Officers can then take appropriate action to address any personal needs for support, or any underlying causes, disinterest or concerns, before they escalate beyond any possibility of resolution.
9. If an impartial third party's involvement would assist (for example if the Lodge/Chapter cannot manage the issue without losing the member to Freemasonry), the matter is referred to the Area Chairman or APGP. (See page 2)
10. The Almoner, Mentor/Personal Mentor keeps an overview on individual cases and overall patterns and trends in attendance.
11. They report to the Lodge/Chapter as appropriate so that both corrective/preventative actions can be taken before the overall attendance levels diminish, ever mindful to respect any confidentiality and privacy issues.

Resignation process and Area intervention

WHEN A RESIGNATION IS RECEIVED

When a resignation is received by the Secretary/Scribe, he should immediately inform the Area Chairman or APGP. The Secretary/Scribe is also required to report that resignation at their next regular Lodge/Chapter Meeting. At that meeting Brethren/Companions can, and where appropriate should, vote **NOT** to accept it. That gives a period of 60 days to speak with the Brother/Companion concerned and for the resignation, if so agreed, to be rescinded. (*BoC Rule 183). Please note that even if a resignation is received on or near to an Installation Meeting, the Lodges should still vote to reject it.

Please Note: If the Member still wants to resign after the 60 days, the Lodge/Chapter can lawfully implement the resignation from the date that the Secretary/Scribe originally received it, therefore not incurring any unwanted additional costs to the Member, or Lodge/Chapter should the 60 day period move into a new Masonic year.

IDENTIFYING THE REAL REASONS

The Chairman/APGP determines who is best suited to approach the member to establish the real reason for his resignation and to identify any action that could prevent the resignation from progressing. In many cases it has been found that the first reason given is not the actual reason for the action. The approach might be undertaken by the Chairman/APGP himself or delegated to another Member of the Area Team or someone from outside of the Team who knows the individual well.

A MEETING IS HELD

The appointee arranges the meeting ASAP. At that meeting, through dialogue, the option of rescinding a resignation letter or finding an alternative solution is fully explored, which can include the offer of mediation with Members of his own Lodge/Chapter. Following the Meeting the outcome is promptly communicated back to the Chairman/APGP (If he is not the designate).

OUTCOMES

The outcome of the meeting is communicated, via the Chairman/APGP, to the Lodge Secretary/Chapter Scribe E and appropriate action is taken. If the outcome requires the transfer of the member to a different Lodge or Chapter, then that action should be facilitated by the Chairman/APGP or his designate. If the outcome is that the member is to move to another Province then the Provincial Grand Secretary/Scribe E should be informed, who would then implement any appropriate action that is deemed necessary.

IF THE RESIGNATION IS TO PROCEED

If the dialogue has not reached an amicable resolution then the resignation should be processed in the usual way. **Time is of the essence in all of the above actions if a positive conclusion is to be reached.**

PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT

The Province will endeavour to reduce the number of Brethren lost from their Lodges or Chapters by encouraging the adoption of those aspects of the Members' Pathway that would improve existing processes in terms of the recruitment and retention of members and specifically with regard to retrieval by:-

- 1. Recognising and responding to the early warning signs of dissatisfaction*
- 2. Providing the necessary support to members*
- 3. Speaking with members who appear unsettled, who are indicating their intention to resign or upon the receipt of a resignation to offer support and guidance*

**Book of Constitutions: This process is compliant with the revision made in 2017, to the Book of Constitutions, Rule 183, that introduced a period of 60 days, if so voted by the Membership (See point one above) on receipt of a resignation, for a Member to reconsider and if appropriate, withdraw his resignation.*