

Quick Guide to.....The Committee

WHAT IS A COMMITTEE?

A Committee is basically a group of individuals who have come together because they share a common interest, concern or goal. Each member of a committee will bring with them their own skills, experiences and qualities to drive forward and progress the work of the group.

The purpose of the Committee is to achieve the 'objects' of the association (i.e. the reason it exists), to manage the work of the association, to make and agree decisions, and to tackle any problems or concerns that arise. All of this has to be done in line with the rules and procedures detailed in the association's Constitution.

The size and make-up of the Committee will depend on various things. It needs to be of sufficient size that business can be carried out and decisions made effectively, but not so large as to become simply a talking shop with no decisions being agreed. Commonly, there will be a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer alongside other general Committee members.

The benefit of a Committee is that a wide range of individuals with differing traits and personalities can compliment one another for the good of the group. Members often become involved (voluntarily or through invitation), as a result of their unique level of skills or specialism's in relation to the objects of the group, or as a result of the local knowledge or experience they possess.

Like any meeting, how a Committee meeting is controlled is critical to the effectiveness of the meeting therefore a clear, concise order of business (agenda) and written evidence (minutes) of decisions and actions agreed are essential.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM is the annual opportunity for the Committee and its officers to provide the membership with a report of the activities which have taken place throughout the previous year. Generally, the Chairperson and/or the Secretary will present this to the membership and answer any questions put to them. The Treasurer will report on the finances for the year and will present the audited (or verified) accounts to the membership. An independent, competent person, or auditor who will be responsible for checking the accounts for the coming year will be agreed.

The AGM is also the opportunity to elect new officers and other Committee members from the body of members.

THE AGENDA

A typical agenda for a Committee Meeting might look something like this:

1. **Present**, Who's here?
2. **Apologies**, Who's not here?
3. **Previous minutes**, These should be read and agreed as a true record of the previous meeting by only those who attended it by 'proposing' and 'seconding' them.
4. **Matters arising**, This will include any items from the previous minutes still needing to be discussed, clarified.
5. **Agenda items**, Any topics or areas proposed by the Committee for a fuller discussion; may also include details of correspondence received and sent.
6. **Financial Report**, What money has come in? What money has gone out? Information on the current financial position and any areas of concern.
7. **A.O.B.** Any other relevant business.
8. **D.O.N.M.**, Date of Next Meeting

What are the different roles?

The Chairperson

This person is the main figurehead of the association and will act as spokesperson as and when necessary. Their role is to co-ordinate and direct (Chair) Management Committee meetings, ensuring the agenda is followed properly and there is appropriate time allocated to the different agenda items. They will also work with the Secretary to set the Agenda for meetings. The Chairperson has to be firm yet assertive as they are tasked with keeping order at meetings and ensuring that all Committee members have the opportunity to participate and the meeting is not hijacked by those with the stronger characters. It is also their job to ensure that any decisions are made in a fair and democratic way and that all members of the committee take part.

Occasionally, there may be a Vice-Chairperson appointed who will act as a deputy and carry out the various tasks outlined above in the absence of the main Chairperson.

The Secretary

This person will provide any secretarial and administrative support to the Management Committee. They will be responsible for dealing with any incoming or outgoing correspondence and on any general communication and publicity requirements. They will also take and distribute the minutes of Committee meetings, unless a 'minute secretary' is appointed to specifically do this task, and will liaise with the Chairperson to set the Agenda of meetings. In some instances, the Secretary will complete an Annual Report about the work of the association which will be presented to members, funders and any other interested parties at the AGM each year.

The Secretary must have good organisational and listening skills and be able to communicate well with people at all levels.

The Treasurer

This person will be responsible for the money coming in to (income) or going out of (expenditure) the association. They will have to produce and keep accurate financial records and must present these in appropriate financial statements at the end of every financial year. They will be responsible for liaising with the bank and for regularly monitoring the finances to ensure the group 'stays in the black'. They will also prepare the accounts for the independent financial person or auditor who will check the accuracy of the accounts each year.

A Treasurer needs to be someone who is confident working with numbers and preferably has some degree of experience with preparing accounts. See our '*Quick Guide to Managing the Money*' for more information.

USING SUB-COMMITTEES (or working groups)

It is sometimes difficult or unrealistic for the Management Committee to take care of all the business associated with managing an association. Therefore, the main Committee may delegate certain tasks and establish a sub-committee who will be responsible for taking these things forward. The sub-committee may consist of committee members with a specific interest or expertise on the subject, or may include someone external to the organisation where the task is more specialised. For instance, a Committee might set up a sub-committee to look at organising the annual community fair or a working group to look at pulling together a cocktail of funding to support a new venture or project.

Sub-committees must be given clear direction and instructions as it is their job to report back to the main Committee with any findings or recommendations they may have before any firm decisions are made.

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