

Running an effective voluntary organisation

Trustee & Management Committee roles, responsibilities and liabilities

1 What is a Management Committee?

*“A committee is a group of people trying to **accomplish something** (the purpose) that cannot be better accomplished otherwise.”*

A Management Committee is the group of people who are legally responsible for the overall management and decision making in the group.

They are sometimes referred to as: a committee member, board member, member of the management or executive committee, a director, a governor etc, but regardless of the titles they still have the same responsibilities.

Management Committee members are responsible for planning the direction and activities of the group and its performance. If a group has few or no staff, Management Committee members may be directly involved in its day-to-day running. In larger groups, staff will usually carry out the day to day work. The Management Committee are responsible for directing and monitoring activities and planning for the future.

Board or Management Committee, Director or Trustee?

The name of your organisation’s committee and committee members depends on what type of organisation you are.

Legal Structure	What the Committee is usually called	What the Committee Members are usually called	Name of Governing Document
Unincorporated Association	Management Committee	Management Committee Members	Constitution
Company Limited by Guarantee/Community Interest Company	The Board	Directors	Articles of Association
Unincorporated Registered Charity	Trustee Board	Trustees	Constitution
Charitable Incorporated Organisation	Trustee Board	Trustees	Constitution
Registered Societies (co-operative societies, community benefit societies, and former industrial and provident societies)	The Board	Members	Rules

2 What are the key areas of Management Committee responsibilities?

Vision and Leadership

The Management Committee will originally establish the vision, purpose and aims which will take the group forward “doing” whatever it collectively has been set up to do. In doing this the Management Committee establishes the fundamental values, ethical principles and strategic direction in which the group operates.

Accountability and Legal Liability

The Management Committee is accountable for everything the organisation does, from the day to day activities to how it spends its money. The Management Committee is accountable to the membership of the group and other key stakeholders such as funders. The Management Committee monitors and evaluates all areas of the group’s performance.

Keeping it Legal

Everything the Management Committee and the group do must be in line with its governing document, e.g. constitution or memorandum and articles of association, as this is its set of rules by which it conducts its business.

The Management Committee must also ensure that it keeps itself “safe” by complying with the groups’ rules within its governing document, all relevant legal requirements and any other regulatory requirements such as Contracts for Funding.

Financial Management

The Management Committee ensures that all money, property and resources are properly used, managed and accounted for. Suitable financial systems and procedures should be put in place, reviewed and updated regularly.

Often the role of financial management is delegated to the group’s “Treasurer” but it is important that the Management Committee members realise that financial responsibilities are the joint responsibility for all committee members. Whilst financial duties may be delegated to the Treasurer and workers financial responsibility can not.

Management Committees should receive, and ask for, regular financial reports and seek clarity if they don’t understand any of the information provided.

Managing Staff and Volunteers

In organisations that employ staff, the Management Committee then becomes the employer. They must ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place for staff and volunteers, and that both are properly managed and supported. The Management Committee, usually represented by the Chairperson, also directly line manage the most senior member of staff.

3 What is expected from Management Committee Members?

To act only in the best interests of the group

This means putting the group's interests before any other personal or professional interests. Even if another body such as your employer or local group has nominated you onto another Management Committee, you must remember to serve the best interests of the committee on which you are sitting.

To be involved in major decisions

You need to be actively involved in decision making. If your group's business is carried out at meetings, you need to attend them regularly and contribute to discussions. You should also honor decisions taken at meetings you may not have been able to attend.

To take decisions jointly with the other Management Committee members

The Management Committee must act together for the overall benefit of the group. No member can make decisions or take action alone, unless the governing document specifically allows this or it has been agreed at a previous meeting they should do so on behalf of the group for some reason.

To attend and contribute to all Management Committee meetings

This means devoting the necessary time and effort to prepare for meetings and feeding back to the chairperson your opinions etc on any agenda item if you are unable to attend for any legitimate reason.

To be unpaid?

As a Management Committee member you are a volunteer. You are entitled to claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses if that is the policy of your group. You can be paid for services you provide to your group in certain circumstances and where approval is given in the governing document.

To be objective, honest and behave with integrity

As a Management Committee member this is how you should act in relation to all matters relevant to your group.

To ensure there are no conflicts of interest

It is the responsibility of each Management Committee member to let the Chairperson know of any development that may result in a direct conflict of interest with decisions being taken by the Management Committee.

To use their specific skills, knowledge or experience to contribute to sound decision-making

This should always be done in the best interests of the group and not the individual or any other specific interest/s they hold.

To treat matters within the organisation as confidential and abide by decisions taken

All business within Management Committee meetings is confidential and decisions taken are focused on "collective action". Management Committee members should not seek to undermine any previous decisions.

4 What are the roles within a Management Committee?

All Committee Members:

- Read the constitution – ask questions if you don't understand it
- Help to organise group activities
- Prepare for meetings by reading papers etc
- Contribute to groups collective decision making at all times for the good of the group
- Take joint responsibility for the activities and decisions of the group
- Support the Chairperson, other office bearers and the work of the group
- Read all policy documents, strategic plan etc relevant to the group
- Tell other people about the group
- Encourage new members to join

Chairperson:

- Plan and chair meetings in effective manner
- Ensure everyone has the chance to speak
- Be a leader and public face of the group when the group needs it
- Be fair and open in all dealings
- Make sure people do the things they agreed to do at meetings
- If the group employs staff ensure proper support and management systems are implemented to support them. (The Chairperson often provides direct line management to senior staff)
- May also have financial responsibilities as a cheque signatory for example.
- Keep up to date with what is going on that might help your group

Secretary:

- Make sure everyone receives all the information they need to make decisions
- Plan meetings, agree agenda etc with the Chairperson
- Book and prepare rooms for meetings
- Let everyone know when and where meetings are well in advance
- Send members the agenda, the minutes of the last meeting and any relevant reports etc
- Write down the main points discussed at meetings (minutes) and circulate these
- Deal with letters, phone calls and questions about your group
- Keep and share information you find out which might be useful for the group

Treasurer:

- Keep a record of all money paid and received by the group
- Ensure financial procedures are in place, adhered to and regularly reviewed.
- Provide regular financial reports for Committee members
- Have the groups accounts independently checked every year
- Budget for all group activities
- Ensure payments are made to suppliers
- Read all policy documents, strategic plan etc relevant to the group
- Look after the group's bank account
- Adhere to the law in all fundraising activities

5 What can you do to be a more effective Management Committee member?

Read the governing document

A group's governing document is its set of rules. Your group may call this document the rules, constitution, memorandum and articles of association, trust deed or scheme. Whatever it is called, it is important to read and understand it because you must comply with what it says as it tells you what your group can do "legally".

Find out more about your community group

Read any materials such as annual reports, accounts, minutes of meetings, promotional leaflets and strategic plan to help you understand the purpose of the group and how it works. You should find out the contact information of the group's premises (if applicable) and the other Management Committee members.

Keep within the law

You must be sure the group keeps within all aspects of the law relevant to it. This would be Charity Law, the rules stated within the groups governing document and other laws and regulations, such as health and safety, employment, data protection and so on. It is important to understand the policies of the group and ensure they are being implemented.

Work effectively

You need to monitor the work of your group so you know what it is doing and that it meets legal, funding and constitutional requirements. The Management Committee must ensure that it meets its purpose as effectively as possible.

Learn about the finances of the group

You should find out about the finances of the group, including internal financial controls, projects, accounting, budgeting, fundraising, insurance, investments, reserves and trading. You also need to find out if the group owns or manages property and investments.

Understand how staff and volunteers are managed

You need to understand the staffing structure within the group including supervision and management of staff, the duties of posts held, reporting structures, areas of delegation, health and safety, and equal opportunities.

Ensure resources are managed effectively

You should find out how equipment, vehicles and computer systems etc are managed and maintained.

Understand your liability as a Management Committee member

Management Committee members can help protect themselves from personal liability by:

- Acting reasonably in making decisions
- Working within the governing document
- Taking proper and appropriate professional advice where you don't know enough to make a decision, or where you are required to by law.

Committee Induction

Having an induction process for new committee members is a good idea, so that they are clear about their role and are knowledgeable about the organisation. Here's a list of things that may be useful for new committee members to do in their induction. You could also compile a committee induction pack.

Activities

- Tour of office or other buildings
- Introduction to other committee members
- Introduction and talks with staff
- Informal presentations by staff
- Introduction and talks with volunteers
- Introduction to members
- Observing the organisation's activities or projects
- Reading key information about the organisation (See below)

Induction pack checklist Key documents

- Governing document (Constitution)
- Latest annual report and accounts
- Minutes of recent committee meetings
- Copy of the Charity Commission's The Essential Trustee: What you need to know
- Committee member's role description
- Pocket Guide to the 'National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee Members
- Pocket Guide to the 'Code of Governance for the Voluntary and Community Sector'

Other documents/information

- Key policies, e.g. health and safety, code of conduct, conflict of interest, financial controls and human resources
- History of the organisation
- Organisational structure
- Senior staff job description
- Statement of ethos and values
- Business, strategic or work plans
- Newsletters, publicity material
- Dates and agendas of forthcoming committee meetings
- Names and contact details of other committee members

6 What's next for me? Further training and development?

Management Committee Skills Audit and Training Needs				
Name _____ Organisation _____				
Please indicate your level of knowledge, skills or experience and whether you would like training in this area.				
	High	Medium	Low	Need Training
Understanding your Role				
Role and responsibilities of the Committee				
Role of the Honorary Officers (Chair, Treasurer, Secretary)				
Understanding your constitution / Governing Document				
Understanding the legal structure of your organisation				
Knowledge of Charity Law				
Knowledge of Company Law				
Understanding your legal obligations and which laws apply to your organisation				
Being an Effective Committee				
Organising committee meetings				
Chairing meetings				
Taking Minutes				
Recruiting and inducting new committee members				
Strategy and Planning				
Determining the organisation's vision and mission				
Experience of development or strategic planning				
Formulating policies				
Financial and Risk Management				
Knowledge of budgeting and cash flow forecast				
Experience of fundraising				
Contingency planning and minimising risks				
Managing and Supporting Staff and Volunteers				
Providing staff or volunteer supervision and support				
Knowledge of responsibilities as an employer				
Experience of staff recruitment				