

THE ROLE OF CHAIRPERSON

The role of Chairperson is very difficult and the qualities for effective chairing are not easily defined. There are three main spheres that the Chairperson has to manage:

- * Planning and running of meetings;
- * Ensuring that the organisation as a whole is achieving its goals;
- * Being the official representative of the group.

Responsibilities of the Chair are:

- * Liaise with the secretary concerning arrangements and agendas for meetings;
- * Start the meeting on time and keep to "time limits" allowing reasonable time for each agenda item;
- * Facilitate discussion during the meeting, encouraging all members to participate;
- * Bring items on the agenda to a conclusion with a brief review of points. This will involve inviting proposals/decisions from the Committee;
- * If a vote has to be taken then clarify voting procedure. In the event of a tie the Chairperson may have the casting vote; and
- * At the close of the meeting fix a date for the next meeting.

A good Chairperson needs to be aware of the difficult and demanding task he/she has taken on. They must know all the Committee members recognising the "strong" and "weak" members and cope accordingly. They will also have to manage conflict in the group, it is inevitable this will occur at some point. The Chair must be well prepared for possible controversial or delicate items on the agenda. This will require diplomacy and sensitivity including knowing when his/her personal opinions may need to be suppressed.

THE ROLE OF SECRETARY

The role of Secretary can be the most interesting and demanding office to hold on a Committee. Some larger organisations choose to have staff members carry out some secretarial functions. If this is the case it is important to be clear about who is carrying out the various duties.

Responsibilities of the Secretary are:

- * To note all correspondence (in and out) on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting;
- * To keep the membership lists up to date;
- * To keep minute book safe, they must never be destroyed;
- * To convene meetings and prepare agendas;
- * To carry out actions from each meeting;
- * To consult with Committee Members for items to be included on the agenda;
- * To record names of those in attendance and apologies for non-attendance;
- * To ensure there is a quorum, the minimum number of committee members required to make a decision
- * To write up minutes as soon as possible after meetings—when the discussions are fresh in your mind!;
- * To oversee the production of the Annual Report;
- * To make arrangements for the Annual General meeting;
- * To obtain nominations for people wishing to become office bearers and committee members for the following year; and
- * To send reports of meetings to the press where appropriate.

THE ROLE OF TREASURER

The treasurer holds considerable responsibility yet has no absolute power over the way in which financial resources are used. These decisions are taken by the Management Committee as a whole.

It is the Treasurer's role to ensure that the group spends its money correctly, and this will involve regularly advising Committee members on the group's financial affairs. It is therefore advantageous if the Treasurer has some expertise in financial matters, some Treasurers may require training eg. On how to set budgets. The Treasurer must be fully committed to the aims and objectives of the organisation and understand its priorities so that his/her advice can be presented accordingly.

Responsibilities of the Treasurer are:

- * To monitor all the organisation's financial resources;
- * To advise on the use of those resources for maximum advantage;
- * To protect the financial interests of the individual committee members;
- * To accurately maintain the books of the account;
- * To liaise (and possibly supervise) staff who deal with financial matters;
- * To prepare estimates and budgets;
- * To submit regular financial reports to the committee; and
- * To oversee fundraising developments and applications.

BEING A COMMITTEE MEMBER

Nearly all voluntary organisations, including trusts have a small group of voluntary members who take on the responsibility of managing and running the work. This is the Management Committee or Board of Directors. They make decisions at meetings and in addition to this they often participate in the organisation's day to day running, either in the form of practical work or supervising the organisation's processes. Being a Committee Member or Board of Director requires dedication and commitment.

Certain skills are required of Committee Members if they are to be active and meaningful members of the group. This will ensure a healthy organisation that is clear about its aims and managing to work effectively towards achieving them. Being a good Committee Member is not always easy, it requires commitment and skills that have to be learned. Committee Members should:

- * Be regular in attendance and arrive on time;
- * Be well prepared with an agenda and relevant paper;
- * Have completed the action points required of them;
- * Be able to contribute to discussions constructively;
- * Be well briefed and informed about the various items on the agenda and prepared to take the lead occasionally;
- * Be assertive without being aggressive; and
- * Be aware of the organisation's goals and bear them in mind in all discussions.

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ROLE OF VOLUNTARY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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