

The different roles at committee meetings

Introduction

All members of committees take on certain responsibilities whether they hold an honorary office or not.

Some of the roles of committee members are:

- To ensure that the organisation is meeting its stated aims and is operating in accordance with its rules.
- To attend meetings regularly and prepare for them by doing any background reading of documents, agendas etc
- To carry out any tasks in between meetings that you have agreed to undertake
- Contribute to the policy and decision making function of the meeting
- Bring any special knowledge and skills to bear in the interests of the organisation.

- Work on sub-groups or working groups or individually in the interests of the organisation and report back to meetings
- To treat other committee and group members with respect and keep confidential sensitive personal and group material and details.

The above provides very basic information on the roles of committee members. Descriptions of the role of specific officers can be found below.

For a more detailed explanation of such responsibilities go to the Governance Hub at www.governancehub.org.uk and follow the appropriate links.

The chair's role at meetings

Ultimately the Chair is responsible for ensuring the committee achieves its aims. The role at meetings is part of this purpose.

- Draw up the Agenda with the Secretary prior to the meeting. Putting the most important items at the beginning of the Agenda means that they can be discussed without fear of running out of time.
- If your group tends to have meetings which go on for too long, you could ask for items under Any Other Business at the start of the meeting. You can then decide how much time you need for discussion. If it seems that any items will need more time than you have available these can be deferred to the next meeting.
- Make sure all items on the Agenda are given appropriate time for discussion and are discussed fairly. If any background information is required be prepared to give it. Don't spend too much time on one item at the expense of another of equal importance.
- Draw discussion on Agenda items to a close and be sure that everyone knows what decision has been reached. If there are differences of opinion



summarise the arguments and if necessary ask for a vote.

- Be sure the person taking the Minutes knows what the final decision is and has noted any action to be taken, who is to take it, and what time-scales were agreed.
 - Try to ensure that everyone gets the chance to contribute. Don't let the stronger or more voluble members dominate the discussion.
 - Be conscious of someone trying to catch your eye. They might want to be given the chance to speak but don't like interrupting the more confident and, possibly, articulate members.
- Be sensitive to the internal dynamics of the group. If a conflict of views develops consider whether the person who seemed to fare the worst needs your support. Hurt feelings may need to be bolstered.
- It may be that one of the quieter members puts forward a suggestion more timidly, which is either not heard or not valued by the others. Try to be receptive to this kind of situation and respond appropriately. You could, for example, repeat the contribution, pointing out its advantages and

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The points highlighted above are of relevance to the Chair's function in relation to Committee Meetings. Many groups will have additional tasks for the Chair to

carry out, for example, representing the group to other agencies and organisations.

The treasurer's role at meetings

The Treasurer should be in a position to give members an up-to-date account of the finances of the group at each meeting. This should include how much money they have in the bank, what amounts are outstanding for payment and any monies owed to the group.

- If your committee is going to be making financial decisions at meetings or needs to be considering fundraising, then the Treasurer should prepare a report to be given to the meeting to help them make informed judgements. Such a report could contain information such as the present bank balance, outstanding amounts due for payment and any known amounts that will become due in the following few months, any funds or grants expected and not yet received and possibly

incoming and outgoing expenditure from previous years.

- If an Agenda item concerns spending money, it is best that the Treasurer's report precedes the item so that the Committee has all the information they need to make a decision.
- If members receive expenses the Treasurer should ensure that they have completed claims forms and provide receipts and reimburse them accordingly.

The suggestions made above relate to regular committee meetings. The Treasurer will probably have other tasks to perform for the group. In particular, at the Annual General Meeting when he or she should present the annual accounts to the membership. The requirements for AGMs will be as set out in the group's Constitution.

The secretary's role at meetings

The secretary's job is very important and can be quite demanding. The role of Secretary *can* be split up, if necessary. For example, a member might be assigned just to take the Minutes at meetings and the rest of the role carried out by the Committee Secretary. Below are some of the tasks associated with Committee Meetings that need to be carried out which would generally be the responsibility of the Secretary.

- Agree and draw up the Agenda with the Chair prior to the meeting. Send it out in good time. Send any necessary papers out with the agenda which give background information necessary for discussion at the meeting.
- The Secretary's job is vital in ensuring good communication with the other committee members. Make sure that everyone has plenty of notice of meetings. Remind members between meetings of tasks they agreed to carry out.
- It is usually the Secretary's role to make the practical arrangements for the meetings, such as booking the room, organising refreshments and

making sure that everyone can take part. Sometimes people might have additional requirements such as having the papers written in large print.

- Correspondence – letters or documents that have been sent to the group since the last meeting that need to be discussed. If the correspondence is sent to the Secretary, discussion should take place about it prior to the meeting with the Chair. 'Correspondence' can sometimes be a standard agenda item.
- Ensure all documentation, which might be needed, is to hand at meetings. This can include copies of past Minutes, contact lists etc.
- Minutes or notes of the meeting need to be taken and decisions recorded. If you are unsure what decision has been made query this with the Chair. If there are tasks which are assigned to different committee members record these on the Minutes and include any time-scales for the tasks to be completed.

There may be other tasks for the Secretary to carry out in between Committee Meetings.

This fact sheet is one of a series of fact sheets produced by High Peak CVS. **They can all be downloaded from our website www.highpeakcvs.org.uk/how**

To find out how we can help your group, please contact us on 01663 735 350 or email hello@highpeakcvs.org.uk

