

Running a Community Group

9. Role of Office Bearers

Although all committee members, directors and trustees have equality and joint responsibilities, office bearers have specific duties that need to be carried out in the running of the organisation.

Role of the Chair

The Chair is appointed by committee members and has a leadership role to the board. Key duties include:

- Chairing committee meetings and ensuring annual general meetings and extraordinary general meetings are carried out in accordance with the organisations governing document.
- Ensuring discussion and decision-making is democratic and everyone is able to participate fully in meetings, in accordance with the governing document.

In addition to these duties the Chair may have additional responsibilities including:

- Supporting and supervising the chief officer.
- Acting as a figurehead for the group.
- Leading on the development of the board.

Role of the Treasurer

The Treasurer should have a good understanding of financial systems and reporting. They are responsible for overseeing the finances of the organisation. They report to, and advise, the committee on how to carry out its financial responsibilities. Tasks can include:

- Controlling and accounting for the organisation's finances.
- Presenting regular financial reports to the committee
- Overseeing bookkeeping.
- Being a counter signatory to banking transactions
- Preparing the Treasurer's report for the annual general meeting
- Liaising with the appointed Auditor or Independent Examiner for the annual review of accounts

Role of the Secretary

The tasks and duties of a Secretary will depend on the type and size of a group. The activities will be agreed by the committee and should be recorded in a specific duties document. Tasks can include:

- Dealing with correspondence
- Convening meetings and booking rooms
- Preparing agendas for the meeting (in consultation with the staff and other management committee officers)
- Taking the minutes of meetings
- Ensuring back-up information is available at meetings where required
- Keeping records NOTE As soon as you start keeping records of people's personal details i.e. their names & addresses you must comply with data protection regulations.

Company Secretary

It is no longer a legal requirement to appoint a company secretary unless the governing document of the organisations specifically requires one however, many incorporated third sector groups will appoint a company secretary whose role is to ensure that the company complies with the requirements of company law.

The company secretary doesn't have to be a board member, the organisation can choose anyone it believes is suitable for the task such as a solicitor or accountant. If a board member is the company secretary they retain all the normal rights and responsibilities of a director – including the right to make decisions and vote at board meetings. If a member of the company is the company secretary they retain the normal rights and responsibilities of membership including the right to vote at general meetings. If the secretary is someone else, e.g. a staff member, the position does not automatically make them a member of the board, or a member of the organisation, and they have none of the rights or responsibilities of either.

Patrons and presidents

Patrons and presidents are usually people who support a charity by taking on a figurehead role. They are not trustees, unless the governing document clearly states otherwise and they do not have voting rights. The duties, role and authority should be documented in a role description document or Code of Conduct.

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