



### **Fact Sheet 3: Management Committees**

Any voluntary organisation needs a committee of people to organise how the group is run. This is to ensure that decisions are made in a democratic way and that all committee members take collective responsibility.

The committee should meet as often as stated in the constitution. This would normally be often enough so that the committee knows exactly what is going on with the organisation, but not so often that nothing happens except meetings! (For more about constitutions, see **Factsheet 2: Constitutions**).

If your constitution states that your organisation has a membership (usual for voluntary organisations), your committee members usually come from amongst the membership. Your constitution should state how committee members are voted on to the committee and for how long they serve. The committee as a whole has a responsibility to:

- meet! This sounds obvious but if the committee doesn't meet regularly it can't manage the running of the organisation properly.
- ensure the organisation follows its aims and objectives
- carries out its aims in accordance with the law
- ensure the organisation manages its finances properly
- ensure that activities carried out and decisions made are in the best interest of the organisation and not any individual member of the committee
- if necessary, the committee can organise sub-committees to take on specific tasks such as finance or for organising an event.

It is good practice at each meeting of the committee to table a list of payments made since the last meeting for the committee to approve them formally.

Even if your group employs staff, the ultimate responsibility lies with the committee. Having an induction process for new management committee members can help to involve them properly from the start. You could have an introduction pack which includes your constitution, all the organisations' policies and recent accounts. Ensure that new members aren't bombarded with lots of jargon.

If your organisation is a registered charity, then it must abide by charity law. Officially your management committee members are known as charity trustees. The Charity Commission publishes a leaflet (CC3) called **Responsibility of Charity Trustees**. However, if you are not a registered charity it doesn't mean you can be irresponsible and mismanage the organisation. Following charity law is good practice for all voluntary organisations.

## **1: Common management committee behaviour**

### ***Power***

You need to avoid the danger of having one person wanting to control the organisation and everything it does. This is often the person who first had the idea for the organisation and finds it difficult to let go.

### ***Laziness***

There will inevitably be someone who does not pull his or her weight, and will leave everything to someone else.

### ***The Quiet One***

Being a committee member can be quite daunting for some people. Make sure new members are not overwhelmed by what they've taken on, and are given as much support as possible.

## **2: Honorary officers**

Honorary officers might sound rather grand, but essentially it is (usually) three people who have specific responsibilities as well as being management committee members. These are:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Some organisations choose to have a vice-chair as well, or perhaps have some form of wording in the constitution that covers what happens if a deputy is needed.

### **The Chair**

The Chair is often the spokesperson for the organisation, particularly when it has no paid staff. Chairs are responsible for keeping meetings to order and ensuring the committee gets through the agenda. Other important points are:

- clarifying specific points, especially any names and acronyms that might be unclear, especially to new committee members
- encourage participation by everyone
- don't allow certain individuals to dominate the discussions
- keep a check on timewasting, interruptions, and any personal attacks
- remember to thank everyone for their time and effort. Committee members are volunteers and like to be valued.

It is not just the meetings that are important. It is just as vital to be prepared for meetings and to try to be aware of questions that may be raised by the committee. It is important the chair is supported by the rest of the committee and doesn't take on too much of the work.

### **The Secretary**

Usually the main job of the secretary is to keep minutes (notes) of meetings and to distribute them to management committee members. Other roles can be decided by the committee

### **The Treasurer**

The duties of the treasurer can depend on the size of the organisation. In a large organisation with paid staff who undertake the day-to-day finance work, the treasurer has more of a planning and authorising role. In a smaller organisation, the treasurer is responsible for:

- keeping the petty cash book up-to-date
- authorising purchases
- keeping the books
- keeping the committee informed about the financial position of the organisation
- signing cheques

**VASA can provide a personalised service to assist you with matters relating to committees and meetings. Please contact Dominic Momcilovic for advice on 01789 298102 or by email [dominic.momcilovic@vasa.org.uk](mailto:dominic.momcilovic@vasa.org.uk)**