

Responsibilities of a management committee

Every community organisation has a governing body, a group of people which manages its affairs. This is most commonly referred to as the management committee.

However your own group may use a different name, such as an executive committee or steering group.

A very small and informal group may not have a separate committee and, in this case, its entire membership is the governing body. Here we use the term management committee to describe the governing body of any community group. We have included within this Toolbox Guidance Note a description of what a management committee is, who sits on it, and what individual members do.

What is a management committee?

A typical community group ranges in size from a handful of members to a membership of a hundred or more. The Voluntary sector across Cambridgeshire is very diverse, and consists of both small and large groups. The group of people which runs the affairs of these groups is commonly referred to as the management committee. Most community groups have a constitution (or a set of rules). A section of this defines the management committee, including its size and how often it should meet.

There are other forms of community organisations – charitable companies

(incorporated organisations) and charitable trusts. Their governing bodies have similar responsibilities to the management committee of a community group, but they have additional legal obligations. Contact support Cambridgeshire if you require more information on Incorporated Organisations by emailing info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk.

Who sits on the management committee?

The committee is drawn from members of the group and is elected by them, usually at an annual general meeting (AGM). Groups often have officers, such as a chair, secretary and treasurer, and they too are part of the management committee. They may be elected by the full membership at the AGM or by the committee at its first meeting, according to the constitution. Although the officers carry out particular jobs in the group, they have no more legal or financial responsibilities than other committee members.

The committee may also invite other people to serve on the committee (known as co-opting). They may be members of the group but can come from outside, and are generally co-opted because they have particular skills or knowledge. A very small group may meet informally and have no elected committee. Many groups with modest aims and activities run very successfully like this. In this instance, the entire group is the 'management committee' and everyone is responsible for the group's affairs.

What do individual committee members do?

Although every committee member shares responsibility, this does not mean that each member has to undertake every task. The job of committee members is to ensure that someone does each task and reports back. The tasks may be done by committee members, members of the group or people from outside. The most important aspect is that the committee should work together and take joint responsibility.

Main responsibilities

The aim of this Guidance Note is to look in more detail at what a Management Committee might need to do. Not all of this Guidance Note will apply to every group.

Even so, you may find the list of responsibilities daunting – there are well over 500 successful groups across Cambridgeshire, most run by people in their spare time. Committee members are not expected to be experts, and there are lots of places where you can get help if you need it. Contact Support Cambridgeshire in the first instance.

Specific responsibilities

In carrying out its job, the committee has to take account of good practice and the law. In this note we have broken these responsibilities down into a simple 8 point plan. Support Cambridgeshire can provide further advice and information on any of these points.

1. Running the group and meetings
2. Keeping the group on track
3. Finances
4. Fundraising
5. General organisation
6. Legal liability
7. Organising events and activities, and
8. Members of the group and people you work with.

Running the group and meetings

You will need to arrange regular committee meetings and general meetings of the Group. In addition, you will need to organise the annual general meeting, which also includes elections to the committee. You will need to ensure that minutes are taken regularly, and that recording decisions and tasks are diligently undertaken. Being precise with this type of information will help to ensure that the group functions successfully.

If you have a constitution, it will prescribe how often meetings should take place or who is entitled to attend. Although a group can run successfully without a constitution, it is advisable for every group to have some written rules.

These rules can be very basic, but your group will run more smoothly if everyone is clear about the aims of the group, how it works, and who does what.

Keeping the group on track

Many newcomers often become part of a group without fully understanding the overall aims or objectives. It is not uncommon to find individual committee members who are unaware that they are part of a management committee with associated responsibilities.

It is therefore imperative to review the group's activities regularly – and keep each member of the committee informed.

Are you doing what the group is set up to do?

Every task or activity that your group decides to do will help it achieve its aims. However it is easy to get side-tracked (the technical term is mission drift).

It is a good idea for the committee to regularly examine and review what the group is doing and assess whether it is achieving its aims.

If you are a larger group, it may be useful to have a systematic way of collecting information on your activities - it will make it easier to assess whether the group is on track. You will almost certainly need to have reliable information if you have to report to a funder on how you have used your finances.

Finances

Every committee member is responsible for making sure that the group accounts for its money properly. It is not just the responsibility of the treasurer even though they deal with the money day-to-day. If lots of people are handling money or the group takes in regular

amounts of cash, it is a good idea to write some basic rules to ensure that everybody does the same thing and that the money is properly looked after. A few imperatives.

- Keep proper financial records
- If you have grants, make sure that you spend the money as you said you would in the grant application
- Prepare financial reports for each committee meeting
- Prepare end-of-year accounts, and have them examined if required by the constitution or charity law
- Draw up basic financial rules

Fundraising

Work out a basic budget and decide how you will raise the funds.

Fundraising is not separate from the group's activities. You need to have a clear idea of what your group will do in the coming year in order to work out how much you need and to describe

the work in an application. So, try to involve everyone on the committee or in the whole group in planning and fundraising.

General organisation

Some insurances, such as employers' liability insurance are a legal requirement. Depending on your group's activities other insurances may be a good idea; some may be required by your landlord or funder. There are a number of brokers which specialise in arranging insurance for charities and other community organisations.

You should look at ways of trying to ensure that your group is open and welcoming to everyone in the community who wants to get involved. It may help to write a policy for the group, but the important thing is what you do. If you are applying for grants, most funders will ask you to show that you are concerned about equal opportunities and many will ask you for a written policy.

Register with the Charity Commission. Your group may have charitable aims and you may need to register as a charity. If you are a registered charity, check whether you need to prepare a Trustees Report and Annual Accounts for the Charity Commission

Legal liability

Take legal or other advice when in doubt. Consider the pros and cons of indemnity insurance.

Committee members can be held personally liable if the group gets into debt or has other legal problems. If there is no management committee, then every member of the group is liable. However, it is rare for individuals to face action and there should be no problems so long as the committee does everything it can to run the group responsibly. It is possible

to take out indemnity insurance to cover committee members if action is taken against them individually. However, this insurance will not be valid if the committee fails to run the group properly and responsibly so this type of insurance may not be good value for money.

If you are registered charity, the law sets out what can and cannot be covered by indemnity insurance. Older constitutions may prohibit the use of such insurance; in this case you will need to get permission from the Charity Commission if you want to take out an indemnity insurance policy.

Organising events and activities

It is important to ensure that events and activities are compliant. You will need to:

- check the regulations on areas such as public entertainment, raffles, creches and childcare, food, drink and venue hire and licensing.
- apply in advance for any necessary licences (such as those required for street collections)
- look carefully at safety (carry out a risk assessment) and first aid
- consider relevant insurance for accidents or cancellation of events
- ensure you have enough staff or volunteers to run or manage the event or activity
- advertise well in advance and budget carefully.

Members of the group and people you work with

You need to always think about equality and diversity. Treat people equally: You have legal obligations towards the people who you provide services to or work with, and to members of your group. The Equality Act 2010 replaced all of the existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act. It covers equality of age,

disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation, as well as pregnancy and maternity.

You also need to think about DBS checks, child protection and safeguarding.

It is your responsibility to protect children and vulnerable adults who take part in your activities. You may be required by law to carry out DBS checks on staff or volunteers. Groups concerned include play-schemes, after school clubs, sports activities for children, social clubs for adults with learning disabilities or advocacy projects.

If you employ one or more persons, your group has a number of legal obligations: You need to be aware of:

- employment laws
- terms and Conditions of Employment for each employee
- grievance and Disciplinary procedures
- the Equality Act 2010
- the Health and Safety at work Regulation
- PAYE, tax and National Insurance Regulations
- Volunteer agreements

Support Cambridgeshire is able to help with further advice and information on any aspect of this Toolbox Guidance Note. Please contact us at info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk

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