

The Committee

The management committee of an organisation is the committee or group of people who are ultimately legally and financially responsible for running the organisation and it is known as the governing body. It may also be called an executive committee or steering committee. If the group is also a limited company they are also company directors.

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

The overall aims of the organisation are listed in the group's constitution and the management committee has to put them into effect. The members of the committee have a responsibility to work together and to take decisions. They share the responsibility for both decisions and actions.

It is important to note that, even if a group employs staff, the ultimate responsibility lies with the management committee.

Committee Members

Committee members are usually elected by members of the organisations at the Annual General Meeting (see our Information Sheet – Annual General Meetings). The constitution should set out how the election is carried out and also state how long someone can be on the committee (usually between one and three years) and how often the committee should meet.

What does the Management Committee do?

The work of the committee will include:

- ❖ Meeting regularly
- ❖ Ensuring the organisation meets the needs of the people it was set up to support
- ❖ Ensuring members are kept informed
- ❖ Manage the finances
- ❖ Agree a budget and a fundraising strategy
- ❖ Making sure the organisation is properly insured

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- ❖ Making sure the organisation stays within the law
 - ❖ Developing policies in areas such as equal opportunities, health and safety, recruitment, induction and supervision of volunteers and employees
 - ❖ Managing volunteers and employees and making sure they are treated fairly
 - ❖ Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the organisation.

In order to manage well committee members need:

- ❖ A shared vision
- ❖ Clear roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Clear short and long term goals
- ❖ An ability and willingness to plan, work together and set targets

Most committees include members with special responsibilities and roles – usually a chairperson – who plans and runs meetings, a secretary – who helps with the smooth running of meetings, deals with minutes and correspondence and a treasurer – who oversees the organisation’s finances.

It is important that these roles are agreed and written down so that people with these positions know exactly what they are supposed to do.

Induction for Committee Members

Having an induction process for new management committee members can help involve them properly from the start. You could have an induction pack which includes your constitution, all the organisational policies and recent accounts. Ensure that new members aren’t bombarded with lots of jargon!

Sub Committees

Some organisations have sub committees and occasional working groups which make sure that certain areas of the work are carried out. These might include fundraising, finance, publicity, events or personnel matters.

Sub Committees can:

- ❖ Reduce the pressure on the management committee
- ❖ Make it easier for committee members to contribute as the work is done in small groups
- ❖ Involve other members of the organisation and staff, if you have them
- ❖ Carry on work between meetings



What are my personal responsibilities?

As a committee member you **should** always:

- ❖ Attend meetings regularly and arrive on time
- ❖ Give apologies if you can't attend and pass on any relevant information to the committee
- ❖ Work as part of a team and take an active part in meetings
- ❖ Listen to others and try not to interrupt
- ❖ Be prepared to share responsibilities
- ❖ Ask if you don't understand something
- ❖ Carry out what you have agreed to do
- ❖ Make sure that decisions are made democratically and abide by the decision made
- ❖ Remember that, if you are representing the organisation at a meeting or event, you are speaking on behalf of the committee not yourself
- ❖ Be non-discriminatory and promote equal opportunities

As a committee member you **should not**:

- ❖ Be disruptive or aggressive
- ❖ Use bad or offensive language
- ❖ Talk too much
- ❖ Interrupt or shout
- ❖ Keep information to yourself
- ❖ Try to dominate the meeting or other committee members
- ❖ Make others feel inadequate or stupid

What are my liabilities?

In principle, as a management committee member you may be personally liable if your charity loses money as a result of a mistake you have made. However, this is unlikely if you have:

- ❖ Acted reasonable
- ❖ Worked within your constitution and
- ❖ Taken proper and appropriate advice where you don't know enough to make a decision

What are the rights of a committee member?

As a committee member you have the right to:

- ❖ Be properly introduced to the organisation when you join, to meet the relevant people and get the right information including annual reports, copies of the constitution and minutes of previous meetings
- ❖ Be provided with the help you need to take a full part in the meeting, such as translation. Childminding, travel and accessible venue
- ❖ Receive training in the skills you need to be a committee member
- ❖ Receive the correct and up-to-date information in good time
- ❖ Be consulted and have a full say in decision making. Everyone should be encouraged to have their say. If you believe decisions are being made by one or two people or the staff are always deciding what happens, say so!
- ❖ Take credit for the work you and the organisation have done
- ❖ Enjoy yourself!

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