

## Guidance Notes

### *Roles and Responsibilities of the Management Committee*

#### **I - What is the Management Committee?**

The Management Committee of a voluntary organisation is the governing body of the organisation, i.e. the group of people that makes decisions about how the organisation functions and is managed, as well as being accountable for what the organisation does. We can say that the management committee is the 'engine' of the organisation.

#### **II - What are the main roles of the management committee ?**

The Management Committee of a voluntary organisation has six main roles or duties:

- a) Giving direction
- b) Accountability
- c) Legal role
- d) Managing people
- e) Managing resources
- f) Managing itself

##### **a) Giving direction to the organisation:**

The management committee needs to ensure that the organisation has a clear direction and purpose, i.e. that there is a common understanding amongst the committee members, the staff, the membership, etc. about the organisation's mission and future direction. The management committee should also ensure that the organisation's vision and mission is reflected in realistic plans, and review progress regularly.

##### **b) The legal role**

The management committee is responsible for making sure that the organisation complies with the law. The main laws the committee needs to be aware of are:

- health and safety law,
- equal opportunities law,
- insurance and protection of the public,
- employment law,

- charity law and/or company law,
- as well as legislation related with your organisation's field of work.

### **c) Accountability**

The management committee of a voluntary organisation is responsible for power and resources delegated to them by members, donors, clients, the public in general, the Charity Commission (if a registered Charity), etc. Voluntary organisations should account for their activities by reporting annually on use of financial resources, progress towards achieving objectives, how effective the organisation has been and who is involved in the organisation's work.

When an organisation has staff and/or volunteers, power has been delegated to them by the management committee, therefore staff must be accountable to the management committee for their work. The committee needs to set up a system for supervising and supporting the work of the staff (including the use of the financial resources of the organisation).

### **d) Managing people**

The management committee is responsible for ensuring that the organisation recruits the right staff and/or volunteers to do the work needed, as well as managing and supporting the staff (including providing opportunities for staff development, i.e. training, mentoring, etc.).

### **e) Managing resources**

The management Committee is expected to be a good manager of all the non-human resources at its disposal, these include financial matters (e.g. monitoring of income and expenditure, investments and reserves), property and equipment, and to ensure that the organisation has enough funds to conduct its activities (i.e. fundraising).

### **f) Managing itself**

The committee is responsible for making sure it functions properly. As part of this role it needs to ensure that:

- it holds effective meetings, i.e. to ensure that it meets often enough to share information, make decisions, and ensure the effective running of the organisation.
- it has its full number of members and that each member is able to contribute fully (i.e. management committee members recruitment and induction)
- ensure that the committee includes members who amongst themselves have the skills and experience necessary to run the organisation in the best possible way.

### **III - The roles and responsibilities of individual members**

#### **a) Personal roles:**

A member of the management committee acts in a personal capacity as well as sharing responsibilities with the other members of the committee. The main duties of a member are:

- To read and understand the organisation's governing document and any other rules and policies in practice.
- To do all necessary to contribute to the proper running of the organisation
- To ensure that the organisation operates within the law.
- To ensure that personal interests do not conflict with the duties as a committee member.
- To ensure that the organisation acts in the best interest of its beneficiaries (clients)

#### **b) Legal roles:**

Any member of the management committee has accepted personal responsibility for the activities of the organisation. This personal responsibility is shared with the other members of the committee. This means that members are expected:

- to know and understand their roles
- to act at all times in the interest of the beneficiaries of the organisation (failing to do so can place a member in breach of trust)
- to ensure that legal requirements are met (refer to Guidance Notes: '*Legal requirements for Voluntary Organisations*')

The main liabilities (i.e. legal responsibilities) of management committee members:

- Liability on debts or claims from any contracts, leases, etc. (this can result if the organisation does not secure adequate funding)
- Liability arising from any breach of trust (if the organisation is a charity)
- Public liability

#### **c) Role as a volunteer**

A committee member is expected to work in a voluntary capacity on the management committee (i.e. s/he cannot be paid).

#### **d) Responsibilities of charity trustees**

If the voluntary organisation is a charity, the members of the management committee have additional responsibilities as trustees (refer to the Charity Commission's Leaflet CC3(a) for more information).



The role of a member and also of the entire management committee is carried out during meetings but also between meetings by direct contact with staff, in sub-committees or working groups, as well as by working alone on particular tasks.

#### **IV - The leadership role and the day-to-day management of the organisation**

In small organisations, which are mainly run by volunteers, it is likely that the management committee members will be involved in the day-to-day management and running of the organisation's activities. This means that the day-to-day management and the direction role are combined.

When organisations grow they will employ staff to undertake the day-to-day management of the organisation. Therefore, the day-to-day management tasks will be delegated by the management committee to the staff members, however the management committee still remains responsible for overseeing the work of the staff to whom responsibilities have been delegated. Rather than performing the day-to-day management tasks, the management committee will then ensure that the organisation is well managed, and that the organisation fulfils its mission and keeps within its strategic direction.

In this case, the leadership role of the management committee is transmitted to the rest of the organisation via the project/programme co-ordinator (chief executive/director). This means that the performance of the organisation will depend on the strength of the relationship between the management committee and the project co-ordinator.

##### **Job descriptions for management committee members**

To enable people to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to become a committee member, it is good practice to give each potential member a job description. Once the person has decided to accept the role it would also be advisable that they sign a declaration of commitment.

The job description should be simple and include the following:

- a) Outline of the main duties of the management committee member
- b) How much time, on average, the committee member will need to carry out his/her duties
- c) What expenses can be claimed
- d) Period in office
- e) Where to go for advice and support



## V - Management Committee Self-assessment

Below is a checklist of some of the main aspects that an 'ideal' management committee should have in place to ensure the effective running of its organisation.

- For each point on the list above give a rating for your committee between 5 and 0 (5 for the points you feel the committee is doing very well; 0 for the points you feel the committee is not doing at all)
- Ask each member of the management committee to do the same.
- Add the scores together to get the effectiveness rating for your management committee. The maximum score is 90. How well do you think you are doing?
- Compare the ratings with the other members of the committee and discuss the low scoring points.
- Discuss and agree what action can be taken to improve the committee's performance in these areas.

### Check list for an *effective* management committee:

1. The organisation has a **mission statement** and a **vision** and these are shared by all in the organisation (including the membership and beneficiaries, as well as donors).
2. The committee has a **good mixture of members** with respect to gender, age, race, disability, beneficiaries representatives and so on (reflecting the organisation's equal opportunities policy).
3. The committee is made up of a variety of people, whose **mix of skills and experience** make the committee effective. (continues...)
4. All members of the management committee are aware and **understand their role and responsibilities** (including legal responsibilities).
5. Each committee member has a **job description** and has signed a declaration of commitment.
6. The committee provides a **good induction** to each new committee member.
7. There is an agreed **code of conduct** for the members and the management committee.
8. The organisation has and **implements the necessary policies** (e.g. equal opportunities, health and safety, recruitment and management of staff and volunteers).
9. The management committee is a **good employer** and manager of volunteers and has the right policies in practice.
10. There are policies in place guiding the management of the finances and of resources.
11. There are **accountability mechanisms** in place (for the committee and staff/volunteers).
12. The organisation has a **budget** and there is a **fundraising strategy**.

13. The organisation has **sound finances** and is working towards achieving financial sustainability.
14. The organisation has **enough financial resources** to run its services.
15. The organisation has a **strategic plan** or business plan and sets realistic objectives for each year.
16. The committee has **effective and enjoyable meetings**.
17. The committee enables the organisation to **get results** and achieve its objectives.
18. The committee **reviews and evaluates regularly** the work of the organisation.

If you would like further information or advice on any of the issues in this Guidance Notes, contact the Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency (WVSDA) on 020 8875 2844/5/6 or Email: [smallgroups@wvsda.org.uk](mailto:smallgroups@wvsda.org.uk), [info@wvsda.org.uk](mailto:info@wvsda.org.uk)

More Guidance Notes can be found on our website, [www.wvsda.org.uk](http://www.wvsda.org.uk).

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