



The role of Secretary

A guide to the duties and responsibilities of a Secretary in a small voluntary organisation





The role of secretary

A good and efficient secretary is a great asset to any organisation and helps it to run smoothly. The secretary should be familiar with the organisation's constitution and the rules contained in it, as should every member. There should always be a close link between the secretary and the chairperson, together they should draw up the agenda for each meeting, be aware of what decisions need to be taken at a meeting, and collaborate about what is recorded in the minutes.

Governing document

The secretary will find much of relevance in the constitution, e.g. the frequency of meetings, when the AGM is due, who receives notices of meetings, and the length of notice to be given. It is a good idea to keep a master copy of the constitution safely in a file but to have a spare copy at every meeting in case of questions or disputes.

New committee members

All new committee members should receive a 'welcome pack' consisting of the constitution, minutes of the AGM, the latest annual report and accounts, copies of minutes of the most recent meetings and any leaflets/marketing produced by the organisation. The master for this pack should be kept with the secretary along with an up to date record of membership and contact details.

Planning a meeting

Before the meeting:

- Consult with the chairperson on order of business and how it should be dealt with on the agenda. Decide what business requires discussion and what requires a decision by the committee
- Ensure that adequate notice has been given, that suitable accommodation has been booked and that copies of the agenda has been prepared.
- Circulate to all members any papers to be discussed at the upcoming meeting, a copy of the agenda, minutes of previous meeting.
- Make sure that any reports or information requested at the last meeting is available.

At the meeting:

- Arrive in good time before the meeting with the minutes and with all the relevant correspondence and business matters for the meeting, in good order. Record the
- 



names of those present, and convey and record apologies received from those present.

- Read the minutes of the previous minutes and if they are approved obtain the chairperson signature on them.
- Report on actions or matters arising from previous minutes. Read any important correspondence that has been received.
- Take notes of the meeting, recording the key points, and making sure that all decisions and proposals have been recorded, as well as the name of the person or group responsible for carrying them out. Make sure action points are clear.
- Make sure that the chairperson is supplied with all the necessary information for the items on the agenda and remind the chairperson if an item has been overlooked.

After the meeting:

- Prepare a draft of the minutes and consult the chairperson and most senior staff person for approval
- Send a reminder notice of each decision requiring action to the relevant person
- Promptly send all correspondence as decided by the management committee.

Agenda

It is normally the duty of the secretary, in consultation with the chairperson, to draw up the agenda. The chairperson has the final say about the order in which items appear. The agenda should not be too short or too long. No meeting should be longer than two hours. As a guide allow 10-15 minutes for each major item on the agenda.

Any major items which are ongoing warrant their own place on the agenda and should not be brought up under matters arising. Matters arising should consist of only brief updates from the previous meeting.

Sub committees should each have a slot on the main committee agenda so that any decisions taken by the sub-committee can be ratified or approved. Recurring calendar business should always appear on the agenda in good time for decisions, e.g. the AGM, finance, holiday schemes, Christmas party, etc.

All items should appear on the agenda in a logical order. For example, a decision about spending money should appear after the treasurer has given the financial report. The agenda should make it clear why each item is there. It should state what is to be discussed and why. For example, for information only, for discussion, for review, etc. It is also appropriate to add the name of the person expected to present the item or report, and even add a time limit to the item. This ensures that everyone attending will know what is expected of them and how long they may have to present an item or put forward their argument.





Correspondence

Correspondence should be discussed with the chairperson and if necessary brought to the attention of the next meeting. All correspondence should be filed after action has been completed. All-important correspondence and financial records should be stored in a safe place for seven years.

Annual Report

If the organisation has a written annual report it often falls to the secretary to compile the report with the chairperson adding a chairperson's report as part of it. A draft of the report should be approved by the committee prior to publication as it is in fact the committee's report of the organisation's activities during a financial year.



Contact:

t: 01259 213 840
e: admin@ctsi.org.uk
w: www.ctsi.org.uk

Address:

The Hub,
Whins Road,
Alloa FK10 3TA



Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is Registered in Scotland Company No. 396838 and is a registered Scottish Charity, charity no. SC042543.