
The Role of the Secretary of the Management Committee/ Board of Trustees

The role and function of the Secretary of the Management Committee or Board of Trustees varies according to the size and nature of the organisation. The role may be carried out by a member of the board or a paid worker of the organisation. Some organisations divide the role up, such as having a minute taker, someone else who deals solely with the correspondence, or giving the Chair and the Senior Officer the task of setting the agendas etc. (This should be discussed and included in the organisation's governing documents, e.g. the constitution. Listed below are some of the tasks that may be given to the Secretary.

1. Organising Meetings

In some cases, the Chair and Secretary work together to plan and prepare for meetings of the Management Committee or Board of Trustees. In other organisations, the Senior Officer plans this with the Chair. If organising these meetings, the responsibilities include:

- Booking and preparing the layout of the meeting room
- Making sure that all the rules for calling meetings are followed in line with the group's constitution, e.g. length of notice needed before meetings are held
- Preparing an agenda for each meeting (this should be done in consultation with the Chair), and to make sure copies are sent out prior to the meeting
- Taking notes or minutes of the meeting, which must be written up and sent out before the next meeting



- If possible, providing some spare copies of previous minutes or any reports which are being discussed at the meeting, You can guarantee that not everyone will remember to bring their paperwork!
- Ensuring he/she has an accurate, up-to-date list of contact details for management committee members/ trustees
- At the beginning of the meeting, he/she must check that quorum is present, i.e. the minimum number of attendees required as laid out on the governing document

2. Setting Agendas

When preparing an Agenda, there are a few basic points to remember:

- Clearly state the name of the group, date, time and place of the meeting
- Set up a system so board members know when can they add items to the agenda, e.g. by a set date before each meeting
- If a guest speaker is coming, then give them an early slot
- Try to follow a logical order of items for discussion, e.g. always include a report from the organisation's Senior Officer

3. Taking Minutes

- At the meeting take brief, but careful notes under a heading for each agenda item
- Make a note of what action has been agreed, who said they would do it and when
- If you're unclear about any aspects of the meeting and/or decisions made, ask the Chair to summarise
- Write or type up your notes as soon as possible after the meeting. It is good practice to check their accuracy with another board member, e.g. the Chair
- Minutes should be brief and clear. The main point is to record decisions and actions to be taken
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- Keep minutes in a file or notebook, along with any reports which were discussed at the meeting.
- Once the Chair has checked the minutes, send them out to members as soon as possible

4. Dealing with Correspondence

In some voluntary and community sector organisations, particularly small ones, the secretary deals with correspondence coming into the organisation. However, in other organisations, this role is the responsibility of staff members. Dealing with correspondence involves:

- Setting up basic information storage systems, to file correspondence under appropriate headings. It is also very important to inform other group members about correspondence received, so the committee can decide what action to take
- Producing and sending out publicity and information about the organisation, and replying to correspondence. It is important to discuss with other group members how to provide publicity and information in an accessible format, where to advertise etc.

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