

Management Committees Made Easy – Sandy Mathers

Management Committees –

Most organisations are run by committees. It is a sensible and well tested way to run an organisation. This is intended to be a **very basic** look at what committees do and how they do it. If you've never been on a committee before, hopefully it will make your job easier.

A management committee has only one job. **To make Decisions!**

To make it even easier, there are **only three** decisions that you can make;

- i) **YES**, we **WILL** do a particular thing
- ii) **NO**, we **WON'T** do a particular thing
- iii) We need **MORE INFORMATION** before we decide **YES** or **NO**.

Committees can't actually carry out their decisions; they need **PEOPLE** to do it for them. Unless you are a committee who has paid employees, the chances are you will be choosing who needs to do the things that need to be done to carry out the rest of your decisions.

Management Committees are made up of members who are elected or appointed, usually at a general meeting of members of the organisation. Your constitution can tell you how they should be elected.

The meetings of the management committee make decisions about the best way to carry out the work of the organisation. It usually gets its power from the constitution, so it's important that you know what your constitution says about the Committee's **powers**. The committee should meet as often as is necessary for the good running of the organisation

The Committee are usually accountable to the members who appointed them. That's why most organisations have to have an **Annual General Meeting**. This gives the members of the organisation a chance to decide how good a job the committee is doing and to re-elect them (or not!).

Depending on the kind of organisation you are, you may also be accountable to other people as well. For example, if your organisation is a charity, your committee may also be accountable to the public through the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

The Committee usually has **ordinary Committee Members** and **Office Bearers** (these are usually the **Chairperson**, the **Secretary** and the **Treasurer**, but some organisations have different titles).

All Committee members have the same responsibilities, but the **Office Bearers** are asked to do special jobs on behalf of the Committee. The **Office Bearers** don't have any more **POWER** than the rest of the Committee, they are just asked to do slightly different jobs within the organisation.

Let's look at all these jobs in turn. These are the jobs people are usually asked to do, but depending on your organisation you may well have extra office bearers to do particular jobs, or you may be asked to do other jobs as well as the ones we talk about.

The Committee Member – Is generally someone appointed by the rest of the membership to run the organisation on their behalf. Their job is to act in the best interests of the organisation and its members. They should attend meetings, be prepared to discuss the questions on the **Agenda** and to listen to the views of others before making the decisions that have to be made. They should co-operate with the Chairperson to ensure the smooth and timely running of the Committee Meetings.

The Chairperson – Is sometimes appointed by the membership at a general meeting, but often by the Committee themselves. Their job is to work with the rest of the Committee to prepare an **Agenda** for meetings (a list of things to be discussed). At the meeting, their job is to make sure that all opinions are heard about the questions being discussed and if possible agreement is found. They are also asked to keep order in the meeting and to make sure that the meeting runs to time. This means that they need the co-operation of the other committee members in this. The Chairperson will usually sum up what the committee has decided on each question for the benefit of the **Minute Taker** (usually the **Secretary**). The Chairperson is often asked to be the public face of the organisation as well.

The Secretary - Is usually the person who communicates with members of the organisation and works with the Chairperson to make sure that Committee Members receive an agenda and any papers required before the meeting. Quite often the Secretary will take a note or **Minute** of the meeting. This is a record of ; Where and when the meeting was held, who was present, any apologies for absence, the adopting of the last minute (basically just agreeing that it is a proper record), what was decided at the meeting and noting who was going to carry out that decision. The minutes don't have to be long and repeat every word that was said. Stick to the essentials that we've just noted.

The Treasurer – Is the person who is asked to take a special interest in the finances of the organisation. Usually they keep the **books** and provide a report on the finances of the organisation to the committee at each meeting. They usually prepare the **accounts** to show to the members at the Annual General Meeting as well. This does **NOT** mean that they are the **ONLY** person responsible for the money..!! **ALL the Committee Members are responsible for the finances..!!**

What happens at a meeting?

The job of a management committee meeting is to make sure that the best decisions are made in the interests of the organisation.

The **agenda** (list of things to be discussed) should be sent out to the committee members before the meeting along with the minute of the last meeting. These days this is often done by email and means that everyone knows what will be discussed at the meeting.

The meeting is “**opened**” by the Chairperson. There will usually be a minimum number of committee members who must be present before the meeting can start. This is called the **quorum**. This ensures that one or two people acting on their own can’t decide what the organisation is going to do.

Most committee meetings start by noting who is present for the minute. The meeting then hears any **apologies** from committee members who are unable to attend. If you can’t come to the meeting for whatever reason, it is polite to let the Secretary know that you won’t be able to attend.

The meeting then usually looks at the **Minutes** of the last meeting. Sometimes members are asked to “**adopt**” the minute. This means that it is agreed to be a proper record of that meeting and that there are no mistakes in the way it was recorded.

Next on the Agenda is often “**Matters Arising**”. These are often opportunities for people to clarify that they have actually done the things that they agreed they would do in the minute of the last meeting.

The meeting then usually discusses the other items on the agenda in turn. It is important to help the chair and your fellow committee members by sticking to the point being discussed and get it dealt with before the next item is discussed. This makes life easier for everybody and helps the person taking the minute to record what is actually decided.

Many committee meetings will have reports from the Chair on what has been achieved since the last meeting and from the Treasurer about the finances of the organisation. The agenda will also have other things to be discussed. These will be different according to what your organisation actually does.

The last two items on the agenda are often shortened to **AOCB** and **DTNM**. This means “**Any Other Competent Business**” which means that members can bring up matters for discussion that have come up since the agenda was sent out. Often this is the way that committees discuss matters that have come up without much warning.

DTNM stands for “**Date and Time of Next Meeting**”. That’s usually the last thing the committee decides before the Chairperson “**closes**” the meeting.

Agenda for the Meeting

Here's what an Agenda sometimes looks like, in this example, points 7, 8 and 9 would be replaced by whatever (and however many) issues your own organisation needs to discuss;

A Management Committee Meeting of Your Org will take place on 17th March 2009 in the Club Rooms at 7.30pm

AGENDA

- 1. Register**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting**
- 4. Matters Arising**
- 5. Chairpersons Report (this may include letters received by the secretary)**
- 6. Treasurers Report**
- 7. Club Room Roof**
- 8. Upcoming AGM**
- 9. Funding Events**
- 10. AOCB**
- 11. DTNM**

It's a good idea not to have too much on the agenda. This makes sure that things are fully discussed, rather than rushed through.

A good committee meeting allows the committee to make decisions about how to deal with the issues it faces. Hopefully this can be done by allowing enough time for everyone to make their opinions known and to suggest suitable compromises.

Rather than having everyone speak at once it is a good idea to "**speak through the chair**". This means that the Chairperson allows everyone to speak in turn, but you must let the Chairperson know that you want to speak! Often this is done by lifting a finger silently. The Chair can let you know that they have seen you by a nod. They will then call you to speak in turn.

This makes sure that everyone can really listen to all the points of view without speaking over each other and having to shout. Again, this makes life easier for everyone on the committee.

Minutes of the Meeting

Here is a very basic example of what can be found in the Minutes of a Committee Meeting. This is an imaginary minute of the meeting that was called by the previous imaginary agenda;

Minute of a Committee Meeting of YourOrg, held in the Clubrooms on 16th February 2009 at 7.30pm

1. **Present;** James Stirling (Chairperson), Michelle Duff (Minute Taker), Allan Young, Alison Chandler (Treasurer), Sandy Mathers, Pauline Gerrard.
2. **Apologies;** Ian Chisholm, Valerie Potts.
3. **Minutes of the Previous meeting;** Were adopted as a correct record.
4. **Matters Arising;** There were no matters arising that were not included in the agenda.
5. **Chairpersons Report** – The Chair reported on activities of the org since the previous meeting. He particularly noted the excellent turnout for the fun day. The Meeting agreed to note the Chairperson's report.
6. **Treasurers Report** - The Treasurer presented financial information to the committee. It was agreed to note the report and the optimistic outlook of the finances.
7. **Club Room Roof.** It was agreed not to decide on a contractor to fix the roof until more quotes could be obtained. The committee agreed to bring this subject up at the next meeting.
8. **Upcoming AGM.** It was noted that the AGM was due to be held in May of this year. Agreed to discuss the arrangements at next committee meeting.
9. **Funding Events.** Discussion around possible funding events. Agreed to attend a "Charities Fair" being organised in Aberdeen. Allan Young and Alison Chandler agreed to attend on behalf of the Committee, further agreed that they would report to the next committee meeting.
10. **AOCB.** There was no AOCB.
11. **DTNM** - 17th March 2009 at 7.30pm in the Club rooms.

The Last Words –

Being on a Committee is a great way to help change things for the better in your community. Committees can manage all sorts of projects and organisations which help to make the quality of our lives and our communities better.

Serving on a Committee is an important way of making sure that things happen. That really is the secret. There is no point in having a meeting just for the sake of having a meeting.

Many of us will have been to meetings where we were not sure what the point was, or were so badly run that we were unsure what was actually being discussed.

Meetings that talk about things endlessly without coming to decisions mean that people are unwilling to attend them in future.

On the other hand, those Organisations that run meetings well and efficiently use the time to make decisions are more likely to attract people to join their committees and to make a difference..!!

Always remember that a committee can only make decisions. It needs people to carry out these decisions. Unless you are a committee which is lucky enough to pay staff to carry out its decisions, this often means that it will be the committee members themselves who carry out the work required to make your decisions a reality.

If you would like to discuss this leaflet, or would like more formal training for your Management Committee, contact **Sandy Mathers**, Development Officer at Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations.

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