

Organising Your Group

Who is going to do the work?

The first job is to make a list of what the group wants to achieve and what the priorities are. This inevitably means work and the most important rule to ensure the survival of your group is not to try and do it all by yourself.

Your constitution will have set out the main jobs/officers that need to be done to enable the group to run effectively - these are usually - Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Here is a very quick guide to what you need to do.

Being the Chair/man/woman/person

It doesn't matter what you call yourself any of the above will work.

The Chair has 2 main roles:-

- Ensuring the smooth running of meetings
- Guiding the group's projects & activities

When you drew up your constitution you may have included a **Vice-Chair**. This job can be very specific with responsibility for a particular project or general as a stand-in/supporter for the Chair.

Being the Secretary

The Secretary's job can be as large or small as they want. The minimum is to keep a record of decisions taken at meetings - the Minutes. But the job can also include publicity about meetings and events, maintaining membership lists, producing newsletters, receiving and sending any of the group's correspondence and managing a website. In reality it's usually

easier for these jobs to be split up. See the section below on "Any Other Jobs".

It is also worth thinking about taking turns at being the minute taker. If the Secretary is always the minute taker they don't get the same chance to participate in meetings - an alternative is to record the meeting and type the minutes up later.. See the section "What Should Go in the Minutes" for some more information.

Being the Treasurer

All group members share responsibility for the money, The Treasurer's job is to keep accurate records to enable them to do so. The main jobs are:-

- Open a bank account
- Keep track of all income and expenditure - keep all receipts and invoices
- Monitor that expenditure is in line with the groups wishes
- Check bank statements
- Help other officers produce budgets for projects and activities
- Provide regular reports for meetings about income and expenditure
- Produce an annual statement of the organisation's accounts and arrange for an independent examination or full audit if appropriate. You should present the statement to the AGM and write the financial part of the annual report.

Too much work?

Any of these jobs can be done as a job-share and you can always ask for help. Don't get lumbered doing something you don't want to

Any Other Jobs

You can have as many job titles as you like and these will depend on the size of your group and the group's interests. These are examples from other groups:-

- Membership Secretary
- Publicity Officer
- Wildlife Officer
- Website Officer
- Social Media Officer

The list is endless, but beware of giving everyone a job title. There is a tendency in groups to see someone with a job title and assume they are going to do all the work. The aim is for people with job titles to identify what needs doing and to find the volunteers to help do it - not to take on all the work themselves.

The most important part of your job is to train and support the person who is going to take over from you!

Agenda and Minutes

The agenda must include:-

- Date, time and venue of the meeting
- Introductions and apologies
- Minutes - checking the minutes are an accurate of the previous meeting
- Matters Arising - anything from the previous minutes that needs a short answer - it is not an opportunity to have the discussion from the last meeting again.
- Any Other Business - anything that has come up since the agenda was produced that has to be dealt with before the next meeting

The Minutes must record:-

- Who attended the meeting & apologies
- Decisions taken
- Who has volunteered to undertake tasks and a timescale
- Agreement to spend money

You don't need to write down the whole discussion

How to Organise a Meeting?

How often should we meet?

Once a month is usual - but you may meet more often if you have a project to plan or a deadline to meet. You may meet less often over the summer holidays or during the winter if you have fewer jobs to do. Aim to meet at least 8 times a year.

When and Where should we meet?

Pick a time of day when as many people as possible can come - think about those with children to care for in the evenings or people getting back from work. You will never find a time or day to suit everyone so consider rotating the day of the week and even the time of day.

How long should a meeting last?

After an hour your meeting will become less effective - aim for an hour by setting

time limits against each item on the agenda - and stick to them.

Chairing the meeting

The Chair needs to

- Allow everyone the opportunity to contribute to discussions
- Summarise discussion before a vote or at the end of the item
- Check that the Secretary has been able to record the decision
- Resolve disagreements through discussion.
- Be neutral but in charge.

It is important that the Chair does not dominate meetings. An effective Chair will ensure that they do not push their own views but facilitate a discussion to enable others to put forward their views