



scottishathletics 



CHAIRPERSON

GUIDANCE

**GUIDANCE FOR LEADING
A SUCCESSFUL ATHLETICS CLUB**

www.scottishathletics.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

This is a guidance document prepared by **Club Development Scotland** for athletics clubs in Scotland. Many sports clubs are governed by voluntary members and use committees and meetings to assist in the effective management of their club. This resource gives information on the role of a chairperson, including what the role entails, how an individual might go about the role and the skills and qualities required to carry out the role effectively.

ABOUT THE ROLE OF A CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson plays a pivotal role within the committee and is ultimately responsible for its effective operation. The Chairperson is often the highest profile person in the club, leading on external-facing activities and relationships – the face and voice of the club to the outside world.

While the role can be demanding, it can also be rewarding, presenting the opportunity to bring about positive change and development.



Please note this publication is a general summary produced by Club Development Scotland. It should not replace legal advice tailored to your club's specific circumstances.

DUTIES OF A CHAIRPERSON



Provide leadership

The principal role of the chairperson is to provide effective leadership. The person must be willing to lead from the front and set an example for other people involved in the club/organisation to look up to. They should be an effective strategist and a good networker.



Lead meetings

The Chairperson is responsible for making sure that each meeting is planned effectively, conducted according to the constitution and that matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner. Within this, the tasks can be varied.



Manage effectively

The Chairperson must co-ordinate the committee to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the effective management of the organisation. The Chairperson should also regularly review the committee's performance.



Understand members

The Chairperson must understand the requirements of the people associated in playing the sport and facilitate means through which members are represented within the governance of the club.



Ensure equal opportunity

The Chairperson must ensure equal opportunity is provided to everyone, regardless of age, gender, and origin.



Accept positive feedback

The Chairperson should be able to accept constructive feedback and be willing to consider suggestions from other members of the committee, for betterment of the organisation.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF A CHAIRPERSON

Based on the duties and responsibilities of the role, the Chairperson should.

1

Be able to represent the club at local, regional, and national levels.

2

Be up to date with the activities of the club/organisation and its current financial position.

3

Be unbiased and impartial and, if personally involved in a matter, prepared to give up the chair during that particular discussion.

4

Lead committee meetings and manage general meetings.

5

Be well-informed about the agenda of the meeting and the items to be covered.

6

Be responsible in conducting the meetings in a productive manner and ensure that all decisions taken are properly communicated.

7

Be able to keep debate focused, avoiding any deviations from the agreed topics of discussion.

8

Be able to ensure that planning and budgeting for the future are carried out in accordance with the wishes of the members.



9

Be a good listener, who can summarise the main points of a discussion.

10

Be able to communicate clearly and concisely to avoid confusion.

11

Be conversant with the constitution and standing orders of the club/organisation, and with recommended procedure for the conduct of meetings.

12

Be diplomatic and helpful and be able to get the best out of the other committee members.

13

Be able to maintain the harmony within the group, even when there is disagreement about the proposed course of action.

14

Be constantly working to forge good relationships between colleagues and other members of the committee.



CHAIRING MEETINGS

One of a Chairperson's most important roles is to conduct and coordinate meetings. The Chairperson is responsible for steering a committee through its business effectively and efficiently.

BEFORE THE MEETING

1

PLAN

Plan the agenda and include items brought to them by other members. Decide the order and timing of the agenda and who is responsible to introduce each topic.

4

DISTRIBUTE

Ensure all necessary background papers (including the last meeting's minutes) are sent out with the agenda beforehand.

2

IDENTIFY

Identify the topics for discussion or a decision. Include any other relevant information required to be addressed.

3

PREPARE

Be briefed on each item, the actions taken since the last meeting, and be clear about the actions to be taken.



DURING THE MEETING

1

COMMUNICATE

Acknowledge any apologies for absence and let every other member present know about it. Check agenda for potential Conflicts of Interest and make careful observations.

2

CONTROL

Maintain control throughout the meeting and set out any time limits if necessary. Any deviations should be monitored closely. Ensure proper minutes are taken.

3

COAX

Ensure full participation, drawing out quieter members and managing those who are monopolising the meeting. Be prepared to highlight issues that no-one else will, and ask the awkward questions if necessary.

4

COMPARE

Weigh up contributions impartially. All points in favour of a topic should be summarised against all points not in favour. Consider and compare every possible solution before coming to a decision.

5

CLARIFY

Ensure everyone understands what is being discussed and ensure that actions and decisions are recorded, together with who is going to implement them.

6

GUIDE

Steer members to work harmoniously and purposefully as a team and ensure that every decision taken aligns with the values and ethics of the club.



END OF THE MEETING

1

SUMMARISE

Summarise the decisions taken during the meeting and provide precise action plans to be followed up, e.g., who's responsible, by when does the action needs to be taken.

2

AGREE

Agree what special items will be put on the agenda of the next meeting and what work needs to be done, by whom etc.

3

DOCUMENT

Ensure that the minutes are written up, checked, and sent out in good time.

4

PLAN AHEAD

Agree a date for the next meeting - it is usually best to set dates for meetings throughout the year, well in advance.

5

THANK

Thank committee members for their contributions and commitment.



VICE CHAIRPERSONS

A Vice-Chairperson is sometimes appointed from within the management committee to work closely with the Chairperson. While having a Vice-Chairperson is not a mandatory role, it can bring about a range of advantages, such as:

SHARING THE LOAD

The Chairperson has to carry a big load and cannot always ask other committee members to step up. In practice, Vice-Chairpersons will be willing to do more to share tasks, for example chairing a sub-committee, leading on strategy projects or a governance review. It is useful to have a deputy if the Chairperson is juggling several other commitments, or travels a lot, and therefore has limited availability between meetings.

PRESENTING A POTENTIAL SUCCESSOR

Not all Vice-Chairpersons want to be (or are suited to being) Chairperson but in some cases they can make succession planning easier. Some organisations appoint a Vice-Chairperson with the clear understanding they will one day succeed the Chairperson. For others, this is a specialist role with no progression. It pays to be clear about expectations, whether the Vice-Chairperson is expected to inherit the role or not.



PROVIDING A DEPUTY

If the Chairperson is away, indisposed or ill, it's good to have a clearly designated person the board can turn to first, someone to pick up the slack, chair the meeting, keep things rolling. This would ensure that there is no ambiguity when such unforeseen circumstances occur and that the organisation can progress smoothly.

PROVIDING A CRITICAL FRIEND

A good Vice-Chairperson is someone a Chairperson can trust as a sounding board to give them support, giving informal feedback, honest advice and a fresh perspective. A Chairperson sometimes cannot read everything that's going on, and an extra pair of eyes and ears is a real help.

There is increasing recognition and guidance that boards should conduct regular appraisals, evaluating their skills, effectiveness and committee members' contributions. This is a role that a Vice-Chairperson can naturally lead on, particularly appraising the Chairperson themselves. If there are tensions among the board, they potentially have the informal authority to mediate, see the issues more dispassionately and help bridge the gaps.



FREQUENTLY ASKED Q&A

01

Question?

Who fulfils the role of a Chairperson?

Answer :

The Chairperson will normally be elected either by the members of the club at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) or be appointed from those who sit on the management committee.

02

Question?

Should there be a term limit for the Chairperson?

Answer :

It is often recommended that there is a term limit in place for the Chairperson to prevent one person dominating the committee and to allow for fresh blood. The exact length of this term limit may vary according to club constitutions and club election processes. However long a limit your club has implemented, it should give the individual ample time to make a positive contribution towards the progress of the club.

03

Question?

What is the typical background of a Chairperson?

Answer :

The role of chairperson is usually filled by people experienced in positions of leadership in their careers e.g. business owners, senior project managers or senior business managers. The individual needs to be someone who is able to delegate duties to different volunteers successfully and motivate those volunteers to serve the best interests of the club.

CHAIRPERSON ROLE DESCRIPTION

VOLUNTEER ROLE TITLE:

Chairperson

DESIRABLE QUALITIES:

- Knowledge & understanding of the sport
- Good analytical skills
- Proven record of conducting meetings
- Be able to think strategically
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Be friendly and approachable

MAIN TASKS:

- Chairing regular committee meetings and the Annual General Meetings.
- Support the efficient running of the club
- Being actively involved in creating and following the Club Development Plan. Making necessary amendments and striving to achieve targets set.
- Supporting new committee members, taking into consideration skills, experience, and diversity
- Representing the club at local and regional events
- Have a clear understanding of the legal and regulatory responsibilities of the club.

CHAIRPERSON ROLE DESCRIPTION

HOURS/DAYS:

The person should be willing to commit circa 8 hours per month. He/she is expected to attend all committee meetings and conduct at least 1 meeting per month discussing issues the club/organisation is currently facing. In case of a crisis, the person must be willing to attend meetings virtually, unless unavoidable circumstances.

WHAT CAN BE GAINED FROM THIS ROLE?

The leadership skills and attributes acquired from this role could help developing sports in future endeavours. Communication and management experience this role offers could be useful in other roles. This role qualifies the person to take up senior management roles in leading sport organisations. The role is rewarding and has the ability and power to bring a positive change towards the future of the club/organisation or the sport in general.

CHAIRING MEETINGS

SELF-ASSESSMENT

This self-assessment form is a reminder of the duties to be performed by the Chairperson and gives the person feedback about progress and other issues to work on.

Overview	YES	NO
Do you check that items from previous meetings have been actioned?		
Do you read meeting papers thoroughly and make margin notes?		
Do you set objectives and prioritise the agenda accordingly?		
Do you start on time?		
Do you set ground rules at the start of the meetings?		
Are you clear and specific?		
Do you adhere to the agenda?		
Do you make others be clear, specific and to the point?		
Do you allow opportunity for discussion?		
When several people want to speak, do you indicate the order?		
Do you summarise discussions where appropriate?		
Do you listen and question accordingly?		
Do you ensure decisions are taken considering all solutions?		
Do you clarify who has the responsibility for actioning decisions?		
Are you clear in assigning roles and future tasks?		

If you answered 'Yes' to ten or more questions, you are actively influencing meetings to be running smooth and productive...Well Done! If you answered 'Yes' to less than ten questions, try to address these areas and reflect upon these areas in the future.