



scottishathletics 



COMMITTEE MEMBER

GUIDANCE

**GUIDANCE TO BEING A COMMITTEE MEMBER
OF A SUCCESSFUL ATHLETICS CLUB**

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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 governance and management of their club. This resource gives information on the role of committee members, including what the role entails and the skills and qualities required to carry out the role effectively.

If you hold a further role within a committee, namely Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary or Welfare Officer, we recommend also reading the additional guidance notes prepared. These are also available from **scottishathletics**.

ABOUT THE ROLE OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee members, the group of people who manage a club's affairs, are a critical component of any thriving athletics club. A club's success is largely down to the work of its committee who exist to serve the club and to ensure that its members receive the best possible service and experiences.

A lot can be expected from a committee member, with most individuals performing the role on a voluntary basis and juggling various commitments. This guidance by no means covers everything, least of all the type of desirable attributes that are difficult to identify or teach in any guidance. However, it does pick out a few key areas to help you in your role.

Please note that although this document refers to 'Committee' members, the principles presented within are equally applicable to 'Trustees' or 'Directors' within corporate entities (although these individuals may have additional legal obligations depending on the legal structure of the club and which are not addressed within this guidance). Throughout the document, we have highlighted where there may be variations between Committee Members, Trustees and Directors.



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.

WHAT DOES THE COMMITTEE DO?

The committee of an athletics club takes on the ultimate legal and financial responsibility for all the activities of the club. They maintain an overview of policy and strategic direction rather than being involved in day-to-day operations. A committee will make decisions on behalf of the club and will take on duties to ensure everything runs smoothly. Although the way a committee member's role is described may vary according to the size and nature of the organisation, all committee members should be individually committed to:



Upholding the values and objectives of the club.



Giving adequate time and energy to the duties of being a committee member



Acting with integrity and avoiding personal conflicts of interest, or declaring these where they arise

As a committee member, you will make decisions as part of a collective group and hold joint responsibility for decisions and actions taken by the committee, even in your absence, and will be responsible for ensuring that all decisions are taken in the best interests of the organisation and that the committee's role is carried out effectively. This is a mandatory requirement of everyone on the committee.

THE ROLE OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER



Be active

You cannot be a dormant or 'sleeping' management committee member, you are still liable for the decisions the others make in your absence.



Act jointly

An individual has no powers on their own unless they have been specifically delegated to them by the committee (minuted at a proper meeting).



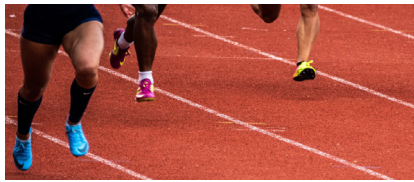
Act constitutionally

Make sure that you act within the powers set out in the club's constitution. This includes following the constitution on how meetings are run and how the committee is recruited.



Act in the interest of members

Consider the needs of your members and make decisions that are best for them.



Act reasonably and honestly

Keep minutes of discussions and debates so that your reasons for your actions can be demonstrated.



Delegate activity, not control

Everything can be delegated except the power of delegation



Avoid conflicts of interest

Manage actual conflicts of interest through a written process/policy and elsewhere avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest.



Lead in areas of expertise

Members should be prepared to make a specific contribution in their own areas of expertise, as applicable. For example, finance, HR, property, legal, etc.

PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

1

ENDEAVOUR

Endeavour to attend all meetings or send apologies to the chair for absences.

2

PROVIDE

Provide comments on papers where you are unable to attend.

3

COMMUNICATE

Talk to the chairperson before the meeting if you need to clarify anything.

4

ARRIVE ON TIME

Arrive on time. Stay to the end.

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

PARTICIPATE

Participate fully in the meeting, listening to what others have to say, contributing positively to the discussion, and providing concise comments.

7

DRAW ATTENTION

Draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in the meeting.

8

FULFIL RESPONSIBILITIES

Fulfil any responsibilities assigned to you at the meeting and be prepared to report back on your progress at the next meeting.

9

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintain confidentiality where required.

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES: VISION & LEADERSHIP

A key responsibility for a committee member is contributing towards the setting of the club's direction and determining how it will get there. Specifically, a Committee Member's role in this sense is:

1

DEVELOP VISION

Be committed to the vision, mission and values of the club.

4

ENSURE WORK IS MONITORED

Ensure the work of the organisation is monitored and evaluated.

2

PROVIDE DIRECTION

Provide strategic direction, including agreeing and monitoring strategic plans.

3

KEEP INFORMED

Keep informed of the activities of the organisation and the wider issues that affect its work.



COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES: ACCOUNTABILITY & LEGAL MATTERS

Committee members are accountable for the actions of the club and are responsible for holding those who carry out the work (staff and/or volunteers) to account. Specifically, a Committee Member's role in this sense is:

1

ENSURE COMPLIANCE

Ensure the club complies with its governing document (e.g. constitution, or memorandum and articles of association, if incorporated). This also includes ensuring the club keeps to the law, including charity and company law (if applicable).

3

MANAGE RISK

Ensure that risks to the club, staff, volunteers and service users are at an acceptable level and are effectively managed.

4

TO BE ACCOUNTABLE

Be accountable to membership, funders and other stakeholders.

2

ENSURE RESOURCE MAXIMISATION

Ensure the club makes efficient use of resources, in particular that all monies are applied to its objects, agreed plans and budgets.



COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The role of a Committee Member in a financial sense is to act as a custodian of the assets, both tangible (money, property etc) and intangible (club's reputation and name). Specifically, a Committee Member's role in this sense is:

1

Understand the financial position of the club.

6

Contribute to fundraising strategies.

2

Ensure the club's finances are properly managed.

7

Ensure the club is properly insured against all foreseeable liabilities.

3

Ensure assets are used appropriately and constitutionally.

8

Ensure the club is a responsible employer and adheres to legislation (if applicable).

4

Ensure the club operates within its agreed accounting policies.

9

Effectively support and manage staff (if applicable).

5

Ensure adequate financial resources for the club.

REQUIRED QUALITIES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The committee's purpose is to act as a custodian of the club across various aspects of its governance. To help your committee to be as effective as possible, make sure it follows a structure that works and is made up of a diverse mix of people with the right skills and experience. Below are some ideal qualities for a committee member:



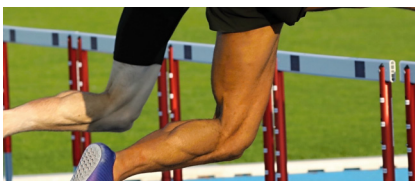
Good leadership skills



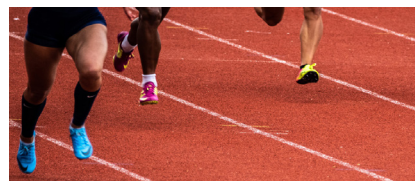
Possess good judgement and independence of mind



Seek constructive debate and dialogue over confrontation



Show a willingness to work collectively as part of a group



Understanding of and commitment to the club, its aim, mission and value



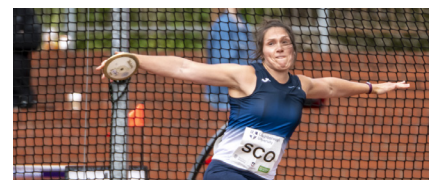
Good communication and interpersonal skills



Impartiality and fairness



Ability to respect confidences



Have a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to the club.

GETTING STARTED AS A COMMITTEE MEMBER

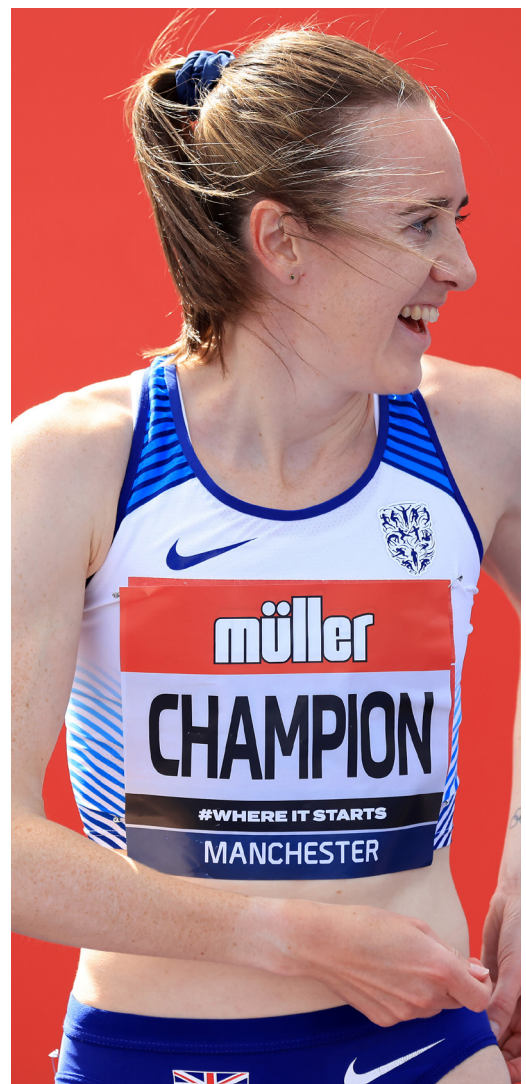
Upon joining a committee, you should receive a formal induction process and briefing by existing members. This process should include you getting access to relevant information to support you in carrying out your responsibilities. This clarity should commence during the recruitment process, with provision of:

- The club's constitution.
- A written role description.
- An overview of the club's finances.
- Discussion of the club's conflicts of interest policy.
- Confirmation of the commitment required; and
- Explanation of the legal status of committee members and their personal liability.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CLUB CONSTITUTION

All athletics clubs should have a proper constitution which should be available to all club members, ideally on the club's website. One of the first things you should do when you join (or ideally before you join) the committee of a club is become familiar with your club's constitution. A constitution sets out the purpose and rules of your club. It is the basic document which helps to ensure smooth and proper running of the club's affairs. Typically, the constitution will set out:

- The objectives for your club (e.g., what you want to do or provide for your members).
- The different forms of membership (e.g., adult, junior, social) and perhaps their subscription rates.
- The rules by which your club will operate.
- How the affairs of the club are to be managed (e.g., by officers and a committee).
- How the members control the club, usually through an annual general meeting.
- Requirements regarding the club's accounting records.



GETTING STARTED (CONTINUED)

HAVE A WRITTEN ROLE DESCRIPTION

For many clubs, the role of committee members is implicitly understood rather than having been written down and agreed. However, your committee will operate more effectively if there is a clear, written outline of the members' purpose and role and it's a good idea to have role descriptions as this will help each committee member understand what is required of them. A template role description is provided towards the end of this guidance document.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

It's good practice for committee members to declare any potential conflicts of interest which might affect their role. [Check out scottishathletic's Conflict of Interest template here.](#)

GET AN ESTIMATE OF COMMITMENT REQUIRED

Within the role description it is good practice for there to be an estimate of how much time is required to undertake the role. The amount of time required will vary from club to club, depending on the size and structure of the club and its committee.

Alternatively, you might refer to the frequency of meetings (including sub-committees) which a member might be expected to attend.



GETTING STARTED (CONTINUED)

UNDERSTAND YOUR POTENTIAL LIABILITY

All committee members should be made aware of their liability when they first come onto the committee. The extent to which committee members are personally liable for their club's debts mostly depends on whether the club is incorporated or unincorporated.

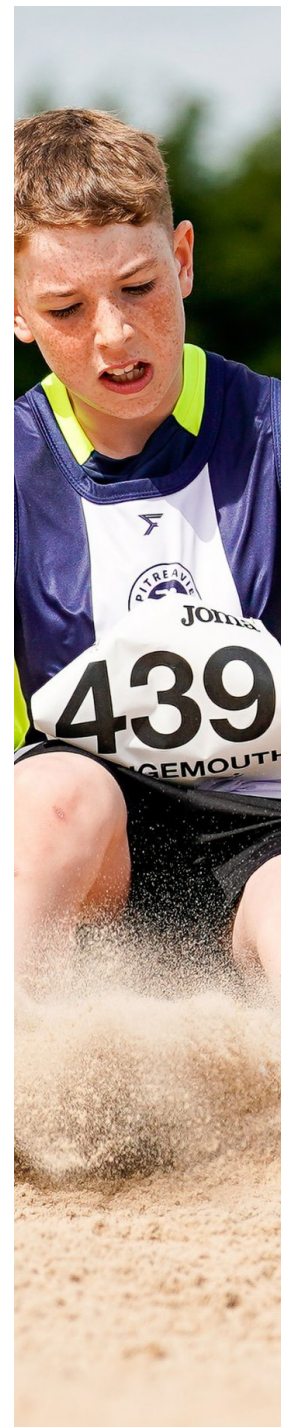
The following guidance is general in nature and if clubs or individual committee members believe they need specific guidance on the issue of committee member liability, it is recommended that they seek formal legal advice on the matter.

Many athletics clubs are unincorporated which means that they have "no legal personality". An unincorporated organisation is easier to set up, cost-effective to establish and there are none of the filing requirements which come with incorporation.

If an unincorporated club wishes to enter into a lease or other contract, one or more committee members must agree to become the contracting party. They will therefore be personally liable although it's good practice to obtain an indemnity from other members or indeed out of the club's assets. There is also a risk of the club being sued and the claimant (i.e. aggrieved employee) suing the committee jointly and severally. This can be somewhat mitigated through insurance (which all clubs should obtain).

An incorporated club has more compliance requirements (for example reporting to Companies House or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator). Clubs should decide what their risks are now and what they might be in the future, and if it is unlikely that the club will incur great debts, own property, or pay staff, there is no real reason to change from being unincorporated to incorporated. However, it is important to note that being incorporated does not protect committee members from personal liability for being negligent or breaking the law.

Incorporated organisations have "legal personality", which means they can enter into contracts, and have debts, in their own right (so the committee members are not personally liable for paying them).



FREQUENTLY ASKED Q&A

1

Question?

Can Management Committee members volunteer for the club in other capacities?

Answer :

Yes. Management Committee members may take on other roles within the organisation. It is important that you can distinguish when you are acting as a Management Committee member and when you are acting as a volunteer as part of the organisation's services, activities or events.

2

Question?

What is the difference between Directors/Committee Members and Trustees?

Answer :

All of these terms are used to describe those responsible for the governance of their clubs. The term will vary depending upon the legal structure of the club. For example, the officers of a limited company will be directors, whereas trustees define the group of people with ultimate responsibility for a charity, whether incorporated or unincorporated. They may also be called the Management Committee, Directors, Executive Committee, etc. Therefore, if you are on the Management Committee of an organisation that is a charity, then you are also a trustee as defined by charity law.

3

Question?

Can a paid member of staff be on the committee?

Answer :

Yes, although this is a rarely an acceptable practice.

4

Question?

Can committee members be paid?

Answer :

Committee members are volunteers and are not paid a fee for their involvement, other than in exceptional cases.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTION

ROLE TITLE:

Committee member

ROLE AIM:

To represent views of members and support the management and governance of the club (using your own background and organization as an informing mechanism)

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To attend meetings of the committee (approximately 6 per year) plus AGM.
- To contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation.

VISION & LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To be committed to the vision, mission and values of the organisation
- To provide strategic direction, including agreeing and monitoring strategic plans.
- To keep informed of the activities of the organisation and the wider issues that affect its work.
- To ensure the work of the organisation is monitored and evaluated.

ACCOUNTABILITY & LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To ensure the organisation complies with its governing document (e.g. constitution or memorandum and articles of association).
- To ensure the organisation keeps to the law, including charity and company law.
- To ensure the organisation makes efficient use of resources, in particular that all monies are applied to its objects, agreed plans and budgets.
- To ensure that risks to the organisation, staff, volunteers and service users are at an acceptable level and are effectively managed.
- To be accountable to membership, funders and other stakeholders.



Please note this is a generic role description for general committee members. For role descriptions for specific roles (Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and Welfare Officer), check our other guidance documents.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTION

FINANCIAL & STAFF MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To understand the financial position of the organisation.
- To ensure the organisation's finances are properly managed.
- To ensure the organisation operates within its agreed accounting policies.
- To ensure adequate financial resources for the organisation.
- To contribute to fundraising strategies.
- To ensure the organisation is properly insured against all reasonable liabilities.
- To ensure the organisation is a responsible employer and adheres to legislation.
- To effectively support and manage the chief officer/manager (as applicable).

QUALITIES & SKILLS REQUIRED OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER:

- Good leadership skills.
- Understanding of and commitment to the organisation's mission & values.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills.
- Impartiality and fairness.
- Ability to respect confidences.
- Good time-keeping.

TIME COMMITMENT REQUIRED:

The term of office for committee members is [as specified in the club's constitution]. The role generally requires a commitment of [e.g. 3 hours per month].

NOTES:

Committee meetings are usually held at the leisure centre on (e.g. day of week) from 6pm – 8pm. The committee will review the time of meetings.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

Overview	YES	NO
Do you action all items from the previous meeting which are your responsibility?		
Do you read the agenda and papers in advance and make margin notes?		
Are you clear and concise? Do you keep to the point?		
Do you state your views?		
Are your suggestions constructive?		
If you disagree, do you say so and speak against?		
If something or someone is unclear do you ask for clarification?		
If you have insufficient information, do you ask for more information?		
If called on to do something you want to refuse, do you say no?		
Do you actively participate in the decision making?		
Are you an active, influencing participant in meetings?		

If you answered 'Yes' to seven or more questions you are making an active contribution to effective meetings...Well Done!

If you answered 'Yes' to less than seven questions, then try to address these areas.