

What is the Role of the Secretary?

The role of the Secretary is to support the Chair in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Management Committee.

In summary, the Secretary is responsible for:

1. Ensuring meetings are effectively organised and minuted
2. Maintaining effective records and administration
3. Upholding the legal requirements of governing documents, charity law, company law etc (where relevant).
4. Communication and correspondence

It is important to note that although the Secretary **ensures** that these responsibilities are met, much of the work may be **delegated** to paid staff or volunteers.

Given these responsibilities, the Secretary often acts as an information and reference point for the Chair and other committee members: clarifying past practice and decisions; confirming legal requirements; and retrieving relevant documentation.

Defining the role in your organisation

What this means in practice depends on the style and size of the organisation:

Where there are no paid staff members...

...the Secretary themselves will carry out all these duties and may also take a greater role in the day-to-day administration of the organisation. This can become a time-consuming role. Some management committees have more than one person with formal responsibility for secretarial tasks (e.g. a Minutes Secretary, Correspondence Secretary and Membership Secretary). Others delegate some of the administrative responsibilities to volunteers outside of the management committee to reduce the burden.

Where there are paid staff members...

...many activities can be delegated (e.g. record keeping, taking minutes, filing correspondence, communication of activities etc). The Secretary then ensures that their responsibilities are met, but will have less involvement in actually carrying them out.

Each Management Committee will have its own way of doing things, and the way in which work is shared out can also depend on the skills, interests or amount of time that a person has to offer. Always ensure that the role description for your Secretary matches the current dynamics of your organisation. (see links below or click [here](#) for more on developing role descriptions).

Main responsibilities of the Secretary

The responsibilities of the Secretary of a Management Committee are outlined below:

1. Ensuring meetings are effectively organised and minuted

- Liaising with the Chair to plan meetings
- Receiving agenda items from committee members
- Circulating agendas and reports
- Taking minutes (unless there is a minutes secretary)
- Circulating approved minutes
- Checking that agreed actions are carried out.

2. Maintaining effective records and administration

- Keeping up-to-date contact details (i.e. names, addresses and telephone numbers) for the management committee and (where relevant) ordinary members of the organisation.
- Filing minutes and reports
- Compiling lists of names and addresses that are useful to the organisation, including those of appropriate officials or officers of voluntary organisations.
- Keeping a record of the organisation's activities
- Keeping a diary of future activities

3. Upholding legal requirements

- Acting as custodian of the organisation's [governing documents](#)
- Checking quorum is present at meetings
- Ensuring elections are in line with stipulated procedures
- Ensuring organisation's activities are in line with its objects
- Ensuring charity and company law requirements are met (where relevant, unless there is a separate company secretary)
- Sitting on appraisal, recruitment and disciplinary panels, as required.

4. Communication and correspondence

- Responding to all committee correspondence
- filing all committee correspondence received and copies of replies sent
- keeping a record of any of the organisation's publications (e.g. leaflets or newsletters) and
- reporting the activities of the organisation and future programmes to members, the press and the public (unless there is an Information or Publicity Officer).
- Preparing a report of the organisation's activities for the year, for the Annual General Meeting.

The Secretary's Role at Meetings

The Secretary is crucial to the smooth running of a Management Committee meeting. This involves activities before, during and after Committee meetings.

In order to be effective, the Secretary of the Management Committee should ensure that they carry out the following activities:

Before the Meeting

- Consult with the Chairperson on the order of business for the meeting, and the way in which it should be dealt with on the agenda. Decide what business requires discussion and what requires a decision by the Management Committee;
- Ensure that the notice of the meeting is given, that suitable accommodation is arranged and confirmed, and that copies of the agenda is prepared;
- Circulate to all members (a) any papers to be discussed at the upcoming meeting and (b) a copy of the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting; and
- Make sure that any reports or information requested at the last meeting is available or that there is a good reason why not.

At the Meeting

- Arrive in good time before the meeting with the minutes and with all the relevant correspondence and business matters for that meeting, in good order. Record the names of those who are present, and convey and record apologies received from those who are absent;
- Read the minutes of the previous meeting, and if they are approved, obtain the Chairperson's signature on them;
- Report on action or matters arising from the previous minutes. Read any important correspondence that has been received;
- Unless there is a Minutes Secretary, take notes of the meeting, recording the key points and making sure that all decisions and proposals are recorded, as well as the name of the person or group responsible for carrying them out. Make sure action points are clear; and
- Make sure that the Chairperson is supplied with all the necessary information for items on the agenda, and remind the Chairperson if an item has been overlooked.

After the Meeting

- Prepare a draft of the minutes (unless there is a minutes secretary) and consult the Chairperson and most senior staff member (where relevant) for approval;
- Send a reminder notice of each decision requiring action to the relevant person; this can be done by telephone, or by an 'action list' with the relevant action for each person duly marked; and
- Promptly send all correspondence as decided by the Management Committee.