



Allotments management toolkit: The Roles of the Management Committee – Information for volunteers

Introduction

Social Farms & Gardens have worked with the Welsh Government to produce a range of resources to help ensure local authorities and others involved in the management of allotment sites in Wales maximise the potential of those sites for the local population.

With support from the Welsh Government, SF&G Wales have written a guidance document for local authorities, growers and growing groups in Wales which provides an overview of allotment site management.

This factsheet is one of a series of factsheets which expand on various topics covered in the Guidance.

The toolkit also includes a selection of sample tenancy and other legal document templates to assist in site management.

All of these resources are available to download from:

www.farmgarden.org.uk/allotment-site-management-toolkit

About this factsheet

This factsheet aims to provide the basic background information about each of the roles typically created to assist with the smooth running of an Association. This information could be shared with potential volunteers for each of the roles to ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them.



The Roles of the Management Committee – Information for volunteers

The Chair

The Chair's job usually falls into four main areas:

- Chairing meetings
- Helping the committee to work together as a team
- Having an overview of the work of the group
- Being the main contact person for the group

Each area is explained briefly below.

Chairing meetings

Chairing meetings is the most visible role of the Chair. Your job is to help the meeting to run smoothly and effectively and involve everyone.

To help you perform this role try to plan and think about the meeting in advance then prepare and share the agenda in good time for others to prepare too.

Once the meeting is underway your role is to make sure:

- The meeting gets through all the necessary business.
- Everyone gets a chance to talk and no one dominates.
- Clear decisions are reached and any action noted.
- The meeting starts and finishes on time.

Helping the committee to work together as a team

The strongest committees work as a team. The Chair is an important part of the team but is not the boss. It is not your role to make all the decisions or do all the work. It is your role to encourage and involve all committee members in whatever way they are able to contribute.

Having an overview of the work of the group

The day-to-day work of the group is important, but someone needs to be thinking about the bigger picture. It's not up to the Chair to decide the direction and activity of the group, but to help the committee work this out. Regularly remind yourself of your aims and think about what needs to be done to achieve them.

Some ways of doing this are:

- Once a year, have a discussion at the committee about the group's plans for the coming year. What are the main things you want to achieve?
- Have a regular item on the agenda to discuss how recent events and activities went. For example, what worked and what didn't at your public meeting, or the successes and problems with a Fun Day.

Being the main contact person for the group

The Chair is often the first point of contact for the Council, other voluntary organisations or anyone else interested in the work of the group. You might be asked to attend other groups' events, or to get involved with another project.

It's not the Chair's job to take all this on alone. Discuss it with committee members, see if it is something the group wants to do, and if so, who is best person to do it.

The Chair, along with the Secretary, is also often the advertised contact person for new members.

The Secretary

The Secretary's job usually falls into three main areas:

- Taking minutes at meetings
- Keeping people informed
- Receiving and responding to messages, emails and other correspondence on behalf of the group.

Taking minutes at meetings

Taking minutes is often the main job of the Secretary. Minutes are simply notes taken during the meeting to remind you what was discussed and agreed. A few central points to remember are:

- Don't try to write everything down – it's impossible and not useful.
- Concentrate on getting down what has been decided, and who is going to do it.
- Listen carefully to the discussion and think about what overall points are being made.

Keeping people informed

There is a basic level of communication needed in every group:

- Committee members need to know the date, time and place of the next meeting, and receive minutes and an agenda.
- The people you are trying to reach and include in your group need to know you exist, what you are doing, and how to contact you and get involved.

How much, and what sort of publicity you need will depend on exactly what you are trying to do. It's not up to the Secretary to make all the decisions about your publicity and communication – the committee needs to think about this and divide up and delegate tasks.

There are also lots of different ways of communicating with each other. You need to work out what suits your members best and might want to use a mix of different methods, such as social media as well as printed flyers.

Receiving and responding to messages, emails and other correspondence on behalf of the group

The Secretary, along with the Chair, is often the contact for information from other organisations or any formal communication with the

group. The Secretary and Chair are also often the advertised contacts for people interested in joining the group.

The Secretary's role is to make sure that any information they receive is dealt with. This doesn't necessarily mean doing it all yourself but making sure that someone is. For example, an invitation to attend an event could go to the next committee meeting and an enquiry from someone interested in joining the group could be passed on to another committee member.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer has the day-to-day responsibility of looking after the group's money. They need to have an overview of the group's financial situation and provide information to help the group make informed decisions.

It is important to remember that the Treasurer does not have sole responsibility for the group's finances. It is up to the committee as a whole to decide how funds will be raised and spent. It's also up to the committee to make sure that the group's money is being handled properly.

The Treasurer's job covers two main areas:

- Keeping financial records for the group
- Keeping the committee informed

Keeping financial records for the group

The most important thing is to write everything down, and to keep all connected paperwork. Don't put off the task of recording money that has been received and spent until it becomes confusing and complicated. Do it straight away!

Here is quick checklist of the main tasks:

- Keep a written record of the money going in and out of the group funds.
- Check and keep bank statements.
- Keep receipts for all items bought.
- Keep paperwork for all grants and money received.
- Have a system for dealing with expenses and petty cash.

Keeping the committee informed

It is the Treasurer's job to keep the committee informed about the group's money, so everyone understands the overall financial situation. It's useful to give a financial update at every committee and general meeting. This doesn't have to be a big task.

It's useful for your update to cover:

- How much money the group has.
- How much has been spent since the last meeting, and what on.

- Any problems or issues you have spotted – for example, if there isn't enough money to pay the room hire for your next meeting.

At the Annual General Meeting you will need to provide a fuller report that covers the whole year.

Adapted from:

www.resourcecentre.org.uk



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