

Appendix 1 - Office Bearers Duties and Responsibilities

Community Councils should appoint a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer from among their elected and co-opted members. *Ex-officio* members are not eligible to become officer bearers. In some cases, particularly with smaller Community Councils, a single person may perform one of these roles. However, a single person must only perform a maximum of two roles. In addition, some Community Councils may decide to appoint a Vice Chair to deputise for the Chair or assist in their duties. Office bearers and other Community Councillors should ensure that they are aware of the content of any documents they sign, the reason for any money being received or spent, and that authority has been granted by the Community Council for any of this.

A Minute Secretary may also be appointed, whose sole function is to produce the Minutes of Community Council meetings, leaving the Secretary to perform the other tasks associated with that role. These appointments are normally made at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and last until the following year's AGM. Interim appointments can be made should a vacancy arise.

To be successful, a Community Council needs to have energetic and conscientious Office bearers, prepared to put in the necessary time and effort. It is bad policy to overload one individual, so at times it may be necessary to spread the workload either amongst the Office bearers or the wider Community Council membership.

The Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair has the most important single role to play in making sure that Community Council meetings run smoothly. However, the Chair's role must be given the appropriate respect and support of all members of the Community Council. The Chair is elected in line with the rules set out in the Community Council's Constitution. This Constitution is very important because it provides the framework of procedures that govern the work of the Community Council.

The Chair's job is to make sure that decisions are made on all items which are on the agenda at Community Council meetings. In practice, this usually means they have to make judgements about how much time to allocate to each agenda item, encourage people to make their contributions brief and to the point, and occasionally have to bring speakers back to the agenda item should they have drifted away from this.

In regular meetings, the role is a formal one, and all speakers will be expected to address their comments through the Chair. This helps the Chair to keep control of the discussion. For some items on an agenda, where proceedings do not need to be so formal, the Chair may be happy simply to steer the general direction of the discussion, giving everyone the opportunity to contribute. It is likely to be a combination of both the formal and enabling approaches which are used at the appropriate time, and these are set out below.

General role and responsibilities

The Formal Chair

- Encourages fair play
- Stays in charge
- Remains neutral
- Agenda and timekeeping
- Opens the meeting
- Introduces all agenda items
- Is familiar with all agenda items
- Gets through the agenda in the allotted time

The Enabling Chair

- Has an overview of the task/goals of the meeting
- Helps to clarify goals
- Helps the group to take responsibility for what it wants to accomplish
- Helps the group to carry out its tasks
- Has little emotional investment
- Runs through the agenda at the beginning and gets the meeting's approval for it
- Arranges in advance for someone to introduce each agenda item
- Updates latecomers
- Keeps track of time
- Evaluates how the meeting went at the end

The Formal Chair

- Selects speakers
- Summarises discussion
- Ends discussion
- Makes sure that people keep to the subject

The Enabling Chair

- Encourages and helps everyone to participate
- Encourages the expression of various viewpoints
- Encourages people to keep to the subject
- Clarifies and summarises discussion
- Makes it safe to share feelings
- Suggests ways of handling conflict

Decision making and voting

The Formal Chair

- Makes sure decisions are taken and agreed
- Decides when to vote
- Conducts the vote
- Makes sure that the responsibility for action is allocated

The Enabling Chair

- Suggests structures for decision making

Looks for areas of agreement
Tests to see if there is agreement
Makes sure someone will carry out decisions

During meetings, the Chair has a number of responsibilities:

General role – ensure fair play; stay in charge; remain neutral; do not become emotional.

Agenda and timekeeping – open the meeting on time and stick to time; introduce agenda items (although may pass over to others on the Community Council to present items); be familiar with all the papers; end the meeting at the allotted time, where possible; evaluate how the meeting went.

Discussion – encourage members to speak and help them participate at the appropriate times; encourage expression of various views; encourage people to keep to the subject; clarify and summarise discussion.

Decision making and voting – ensure decisions are taken and agreed; decisions will hopefully be by consensus but, if not, know when and how to conduct a vote; ensure that responsibility for actions is allocated and recorded in the Minute.

Rules – know the rules of the meeting; be the arbiter on points of order and procedure.

Decide if and when Members of the public will be allowed to speak.

It is important to recognise that the Chair's role extends out-with the meetings of the Community Council. They may be called upon to act on behalf of the Community Council between meetings, or to represent the Community Council in dealing with other organisations or outside bodies. Very often, the Chair is seen as the official spokesperson for the Community Council and must be seen as polite, authoritative and fair in all their dealings with outside bodies, groups, individuals and the media.

The Chair is also expected to know the terms of the Community Council's Constitution, Standing Orders and the terms of the Scottish Borders Community Council Scheme, and to make sure that at all stages of its work, the Community Council is operating in line with any formal procedures. In this context, the Chair can be called upon to act as an arbiter when there is a disagreement about how the rules should be interpreted. The duties of the Chair include:

Checking that a meeting has been called in accordance with the rules

Having a thorough knowledge of the rules

Ruling on points of order and procedure

Acting on behalf of the Community Council between meetings

Pursuing decisions made in meetings.

Unless detailed in the Constitution, the Vice Chair has no specific duties, other than standing in for the Chair when they are unable to be present, they will of course need to be familiar with all the duties of the Chair. The Vice Chair post can be a useful preparatory role for a future Chair, but shadowing the current Chair, supporting the Chair in their role, or taking over some of the Chair's workload when necessary or when asked to do so.

The Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for:

- Preparing and circulating the agendas of meetings
- Preparing and circulating the Minutes of meetings
- Answering all correspondence
- Writing any letters/emails
- Circulating information to Community Councillors
- Public relations, including dealing with the media
- Arranging the venue for meetings
- Liaising with officers of the local authority
- Supporting the Chair and obtaining any external specialist advice required by the Community Council

The Secretary needs to be energetic and enthusiastic, prepared to put in the necessary time and effort required. It should be considered essential that the Secretary has the necessary skills and capacity to fulfil their responsibilities e.g. access to laptop/computer, knowledge of IT software packages, familiar with the use of emails and the internet

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the finances of the Community Council. They will make payments on behalf of the Community Council and must keep up to date the Community Council's financial records so that they disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the Community Council.

The Treasurer should:

- Manage the bank account
- Account for all funds received
- Advise the Community Council of its financial position before it commits to spending further funds
- Ensure that money is only spent in a manner approved by the Community Council members as recorded in the Minutes

Any cheques issued should be signed by at least two persons authorised by the Community Council members as recorded in the Minutes and notified to the bank in writing. As a general rule, Treasurers should avoid paying out money other than by check or online transfer as this makes accounting for expenditure much easier.

The Treasurer must keep proper account of all receipts and expenditure, prepare an annual statement of income and expenditure, and have it certified as correct by competent and independent examiner of accounts. They should be formally appointed by the members and named in the Minutes. The annual statement must be formally approved at the next Annual General Meeting when the Treasurer must report, and answer questions raised by members of the Community Council or members of the public. A certified

and approved copy of the accounts needs to be sent in to Scottish Borders Council in order to qualify for the annual grant.