Cumbria County Council

The Role of the Secretary

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The Role of the Secretary

Unless it is stated in the constitution, it is not necessary to have an elected secretary. But it is good practice to have a nominated person and in addition to the qualities needed by all trustees, the secretary should possess the following:

- Organisational ability;
- Knowledge or experience of business and committee procedures;
- Minute-taking experience, if this is not being delegated to staff.

There are two distinct aspects to the role of the secretary and if necessary can be divided between two people, e.g.:

- The minutes secretary who helps the chair plan meetings, ensuring they are held according to the constitution, ensuring notices of meetings or agenda are drawn up and sent in advance if required and members receive all necessary information, taking and distributing minutes, and helping the chair ensure decisions are made when required.
- The correspondence secretary who deals with all correspondence, ensuring that appropriate people are notified of correspondence, sending out publicity or other information about the organisation.

As with all positions on a management committee, the post of secretary should be rewarding and interesting, however, the job can often be difficult and demanding and frequently goes unrecognised.

Helpful Hints

The secretary should:

- Ensure accuracy of the minutes, write them out as soon as possible after the meeting, and submit them to the chair before circulation to members of the committee. Circulate minutes and agendas 2 weeks beforehand. This will give the management committee time to consider any issues for the following meeting.
- Always keep the minute books in a safe place and never destroy old ones.
- It is most important that the secretary keeps the minute book and any evidence of charitable status.
- Keep the membership list up to date and include full details of members get to know as many members as possible.

Sample - Job Description for a Secretary

Job title: Secretary of_____

The role of Secretary is to support the chair by ensuring the smooth functioning of the board.

The responsibilities of the secretary will include either doing the following tasks or delegating them to a member of staff and ensuring that they have been carried out:

- Preparing agendas with the chair and chief executive and consider suggestions from other committee members;
- Making all the arrangements for meetings (booking the room, arranging for equipment and refreshments, organising facilities for those with special needs, etc.);
- Preparing agendas in consultation with the Chair and Chief Executive Officer and circulating them and any supporting papers in good time;
- Receiving agenda items from other trustees/staff;
- Checking that a quorum is present (refer to constitution);
- Minuting the meetings and circulating the draft minutes to all trustees;
- Ensuring that the minutes are signed by the chair once they have been approved;
- Circulating agendas and minutes of the Annual General Meeting and any special or extraordinary meetings;
- In organisations which are companies, acting as company secretary where this role is not delegated to a member of staff;
- Sitting on appraisal, recruitment and disciplinary panels as required;
- Prepare a secretary's annual report;
- Make arrangements for the Annual General Meeting;
- Obtain nominations for people wishing to become officers and committee members for the following year;
- Send reports of meetings to the press.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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