



Supporting The Orkney Community

# Joining a Committee

A guide to the duties and  
responsibilities of Joining a  
Committee

# So you've been asked to join a Committee



Every voluntary organisation, whatever its size or legal status, needs committee members. Whether you realise it or not, you have personal skills and experience which will benefit the committee; if you have a young family, think of how you manage to organise everything and everyone every day; if you are retired, you have many years of life skills; if you can keep cool, calm and collected most of the time, every committee will want you!

You might have been asked to join the committee because you:

- have been actively involved with the organisation for some time and are keen to become involved in running it;
- are aware of, and committed to, the aims of the organisation;
- have specific skills which the organisation needs;
- have the time, commitment and interest, and are aware of the responsibilities involved;
- happened to be at the AGM;
- know someone already on the committee;
- are locally influential

## What is a Committee



When a group is formed, it soon becomes obvious that the more people who attend meetings, the longer it takes to reach any decisions—if ever! To stop this happening, the members elect some people (the committee) to make decisions for the group on behalf of the members.

# What does a Committee actually do



A committee should make sure that the group achieves its aims, operates fairly and openly, and meets all legal requirements. In general, a committee will:

- be responsible for the day to day running of the group, either directly or through staff;
- ensure funding is available to carry out the aims of the group, e.g. from members' fees, grants, donations;
- determine the long term plan for the group;
- agree the plan for the next year, i.e. what is going to be done and when;
- set the budget for the next year, i.e. how available money will be spent;
- if sub-committees are needed (e.g. finance, employment, funding), how they will operate and when they will report back;
- regularly monitor how the plans are proceeding and make decisions accordingly;
- make sure that members know what is going on through meetings, letters, posters, etc;
- organise and publicise the group's annual general meeting (AGM)

# Who does what



VAO has leaflets explaining the roles of the main office bearers (chair, secretary and treasurer).

If an office or position is specified in the constitution, **it must be filled**. Other offices, responsibilities are decided and filled by the committee, e.g. vice-chair, membership officer or any other position as required.

# Rules and Regulations



Every group member should be given a copy of the constitution (or other governing document) when they join. Committee members in particular *must make sure that they read and understand it!* **Everything the group does must be governed by its constitution** and it is the committee's responsibility to ensure this and that the group's aims are achieved.

The committee as a whole is responsible for the management of the group; one individual can't be held responsible for anything that goes wrong.

It is vital that:

- committee meetings are held regularly;
- decisions are made only at quorate committee meetings;
- everyone is aware of what is going on;
- questions are asked and answers given;
- full and accurate records are kept;
- the group operates to its constitution (or other governing document) at all times

## Worth doing



A planning or development day should be held at least once a year for all committee members and staff. This ensures that everyone has a clear idea of where the group is going, what needs to be done and by whom. It is also an opportunity to look at what skills everyone has and what other skills might be useful. What training or support is needed? VAO can provide help in all of these areas.