

Ideas to help people contribute more effectively on a committee:

- Committee familiarisation sessions, to encourage people who might be interested in standing for election to learn what it involves, or talking to potential members on an individual basis
- Encouraging new people to participate in small groups which are less threatening than the whole committee
- An induction pack and induction training for all new committee members; with ongoing training available for any interested members
- Encouraging committee members to visit the office and the organisation's sites so they know what goes on, and to do voluntary work occasionally in the office or with the organisation's users
- Creating an organisational culture in which individuals – with all their diversity – are genuinely respected and appreciated
- Finding out what skills, experience and knowledge people bring to the committee, valuing it and genuinely making use of it
- Sending out agendas and background papers in good time, so people are able to read them and think about the issues
- Providing agendas which are clear about what is being considered, and why
- Producing short, clear papers which outline the main issues and the options
- Chairing meetings well, so people stick to the point, listen to each other, respect each other's views and come to clear decisions
- Making opportunities to chat informally before meetings or during a break
- Creating a sense of partnership between the committee, the manager, staff, volunteers and users, rather than fostering an "us and them" environment
- And most importantly, creating an organisational climate in which the committee is seen – and treated – as a positive asset

Checklist for effective committees

- Are all the members of the governing body broadly aware of their responsibilities for long-term planning, monitoring achievements and problems, and financial planning and control?
- Are all the members of the governing body broadly aware of their legal responsibilities?
- Do committee members know where they can get further information about legal and financial matters?
- Are proper steps taken to familiarise new committee members with the organisation, its work and how the committee operates?
- Do you feel that the committee and staff genuinely work in partnership?

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Making the most of a Committee



- Do committee members get the information they need to enable them to make informed decisions?
- Do you feel that the subcommittee (if appropriate) and committee meetings are effective?

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