



**ROWING
IRELAND**

GOVERNANCE GUIDE



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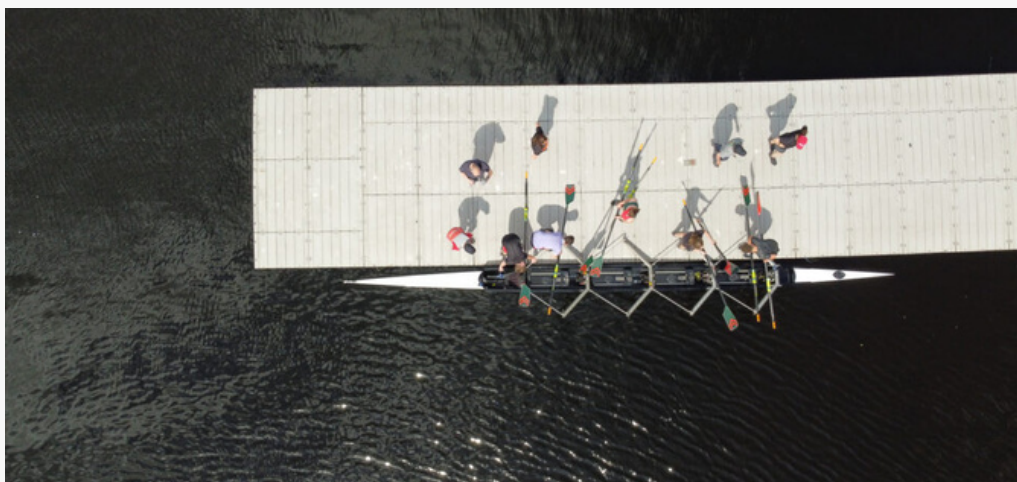
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OVERVIEW: HOW CAN THIS GUIDE HELP YOUR CLUB?



Understanding the importance of governance can help protect you and your club. Many clubs have already started work on their club governance and recognise the important role that it has in building trust and protecting club values, reputation, and accountability.

Governance can however seem like a lot of work, so this guide has been designed to help you break down this work into more manageable sections. We have also provided you with templates on our website you can use and follow to make the club governance journey easier to follow.

The first step to improve club governance is to ensure the matter is discussed and prioritised by the club committee and an agreed course of action is taken to put better governance systems in place.

The committee and its members are responsible for overall good

governance and leading the club to make all necessary changes.

Governance should be understood by every member of the committee, by members of sub committees and any staff employed. Training and education are also recommended to ensure everyone knows the importance of good governance.

Support and Resources

Rowing Ireland can offer advisory support in relation to any areas covered in this guidance document. Sample templates and toolkits that clubs can amend to suit their individual needs can be found on our website.

Ask Rowing Ireland for guidance and advise how to get going and where to find helpful resources to follow.
clubsupport@rowingireland.ie

FOREWORD

- There are a number of reasons why Governance is important to Rowing Ireland.
- At Government level, The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport developed the National Sports Policy 2018–2027 which among other targets specifically requests the adoption by all funded sports bodies of The Governance Code which is the Code advocated by Sport Ireland to be adopted by all sport's National Governing bodies.
- It provides a set of criteria to be followed to ensure best practice of the sporting sector. It is important that Rowing Ireland is also leading good governance in our member clubs and being consistent in our approach.
- Likewise in Northern Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. UK Sport also has a specific code of governance for sport, 'A Code for Sports Governance'.
- The way in which sport as whole is governed has significantly evolved in recent years with greater expectation falling on National Governing Bodies to have solid foundations in place to govern their sports.
- Important of Clubs embracing governance to ensure future sustainability
- Club must be run according to best practice
- This Governance Guide is designed to help clubs have a better understanding of how governance matters can be addressed by clubs and what steps should be considered.
- Good governance provides for accountability, high standards or transparency and helps to build trust and confidence for members as well as other stakeholders.
- Governance can appear difficult and complex but this Governance Guide will assist clubs in understanding the broad aims of Rowing Ireland and where we are heading as an organisation.
- Rowing Ireland are taking the lead by implementing the Club Culture Toolkit which aims to assist clubs to achieve a great club culture and improve gender equality through a 12 step process.
- This Governance Guide caters for clubs of all sizes and should be read in that context, i.e. each club will have its own specific needs and ways of implementing good governance.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNANCE IN SPORT

Governance has long been associated with the corporate world and how banking and financial institutions are managed and controlled, however its roots go back to ancient times and the rules and codes that existed in civilisations and communities. The governance concept in sport has developed more slowly and largely as a reaction to emerging issues and scandals within some of the world's largest sports bodies.

Although sports organisations are recognised as autonomous due to the advent of more professionalisation and financial investment, sports governance has become more fine-tuned and codified across many countries and within international and national structures. When once sporting bodies could manage affairs as it wished, more and more public and governmental scrutiny (and funding) has meant that sports organisations must comply with more requirements and standards in order to operate, affiliate and be financially stable.

The way in which sport is governed has significantly progressed in recent years with greater expectations now falling on National Governing Bodies (NGB's) to have solid governance frameworks in place to govern their sport and their member clubs. In Ireland our NGB's are subject to the The Governance Code for Sport which is now a mandatory code applicable for all members of Sport Ireland. More and more NGB's are also adopting internal codes and minimum standards for clubs to comply with. Rowing Ireland became fully compliant with The Governance Code for Sport in 2022.



SO WHY ARE THESE ADDITIONAL CONTROLS NECESSARY?

By having a good governance framework in place we can collectively ensure we:



Build trust and confidence within our membership and our community



Make our club more attractive for funding (public and private)



Set the culture, ethos and behaviour expected within clubs



Build our clubs reputation



Encourage more people to participate and join



Define everyone's role within the club and encourage teamwork



Ensure everyone can enjoy our sport in a safe, fun, and healthy environment



Allow for club succession and rotation of roles



Protect and safeguard members but particularly children and vulnerable adults



Encourage more diversity and inclusiveness



Set minimum standards of what we expect from our committee and volunteers



Protect the club from legal, financial and regulatory issues



Provide a clear process when complaints or issues are raised



Leave a club legacy for those who come after us

Good governance is there to protect you, your members, your committee and your club

SO, WHAT IS GOVERNANCE AS IT RELATES TO YOUR CLUB?

In simple terms, governance means the process and systems of how a club is run and how it ensures proper controls and practices are in place. It includes how we manage the club, how we hold elections, what rules we have in place and what policies, codes and practices we operate. It also means ensuring we comply with all legal, regulatory, and accounting requirements and ensuring we have appropriate financial controls and risk assessments in place. It also relates to how we as individuals behave, lead and work within our club. In general, it sets the tone and culture of the club.

Good governance shouldn't be mistaken for ticking a box it should encompass the culture your club and the types of behaviours that will be accepted

WHAT DOES GOOD GOVERNANCE LOOK LIKE IN PRACTISE?

Good governance means having good policies and procedures in place that allow clubs to run their affairs as autonomously as possible but to a standard expected of a member of Rowing Ireland.

This means:

- 
- Complying with all rules of affiliation or membership set down by Rowing Ireland
 - Providing a safe and enjoyable environment for members
 - Having a good club culture and ethos
 - Ensuring high standards of safeguarding practices
 - Operating your committee for the overall benefit of the clubs and your members
 - Making good decisions and being transparent about those decisions
 - Encouraging involvement across the membership
 - Being open to new ideas and new people
 - Working as a team, democratically and not for individual/ group interests
 - Being open to new ideas
 - Protecting the reputation of the club and our sport
 - Following a clear strategy and plan to meet club goals
 - Being resilience and sustainable into the future
 - Ensuring your club is inclusive and meets any minimum standards of diversity and inclusivity
 - Complying with any legislation or financial standards, codes or regulations
 - Not letting politics get in the way
 - Doing what is always the best for the Club as a whole
 - Knowing when it's time to step away from a role and allow some new thinking

⁸ **Good governance shouldn't be mistaken for ticking a box. It should encompass the culture within your club, the types of behaviours that will be accepted, and most importantly, the types of behaviours that are not acceptable.**

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOOD GOVERNANCE IS NOT OBSERVED?

When good governance is not observed it can:



Undermine good work of volunteers and membership



Damage relationships between members and the wider community



Expose the club to complaints and concerns



Impact funding and other applications



Lead to reputational damage



Reduce membership applications and renewals



Result in legal, financial or other investigations or cases



Personally affect individuals' health and wellbeing

COMMON CAUSES OF POOR GOVERNANCE INCLUDE:

- Poor club culture
- Good intentions, but a lack of experience or knowledge how to tackle governance
- A skills gap in key areas of finance, risk, safeguarding or legal matters
- Conflicts of interest and loyalty interfering with good decision making
- Lack of diversity, insular thinking including lack of gender balance
- Unfettered power by one or a small group of individuals
- Unwieldy board and committee sizes
- Poor dissemination of information to members and stakeholders
- Absence of term limits
- Lack of internal checks and challenges
- No agreed policies and procedures in place
- Lack of understanding of roles & responsibilities
- Poor meeting processes (papers, minutes etc.)
- Personal disagreements and personality clashes



GOOD GOVERNANCE STARTS WITH CLUB CULTURE

To create your own, choose a topic that interests you. It can be anything from fashion and beauty to travel and the news. Once you have your overall theme, you can start brainstorming the content.

What is club culture?

Club culture is what is experienced by the members of our sport within their club on a daily basis. This is the look and feel experienced when someone enters the club house, it is the interaction between members, the decisions made, the resources allocated. It is the 'feeling at the club' and 'how we do, what we do'.

How do we define club culture?

- Culture is the expression of the club's values, actions and attitudes.
- Culture is how things are done in the club and how the values of the club are espoused in its actions.
- Culture is how the members of the club interact with each other.
- Culture is the attitudes of the club members to each other and to those outside the club.
- Culture is grounded in a shared vision and a set of identified actions/goals.
- Culture develops organically or actively – culture has the greatest chance of being a positive culture when it is built actively in a collaborative way

Club Culture Toolkit

Rowing Ireland developed the Club Culture toolkit to guide and assist clubs to examine and set their own club culture. The toolkit also provides effective strategies and recommendations on how to positively influence club culture and enhance the clubs values and strategic outlook. A number of templates can also be found within the toolkit.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE ROLE OF YOUR CLUB WITHIN ROWING IRELAND

The role of an affiliated rowing club is to provide;



A properly governed and managed community where members can safely partake, enjoy, develop, and improve at the sport of rowing

An opportunity for members to partake in Rowing Ireland licenced events and programs



Equipment and facilities for groups of rowers to come together and participate in teams

An opportunity for learning and developing as a coach, rower, coxswain, umpire, administrator, or volunteer



Safe procedures, policies and insurance are in place to protect the safety and welfare of all its members.

Participation, High Performance Club and Country, Volunteers Development Officers

Rowing Ireland affiliated clubs also play an important role in the development of all aspects of our sport, rowing, coxswain, coaches, umpires, administrators and event organisers. Every person involved in Rowing starts their development at club level many of our vital volunteers come from our clubs.

REPRESENTATION AND AFFILIATION TO ROWING IRELAND



The Committee should ensure that it is correctly affiliated to Rowing Ireland and ensure the club constitution contains the required affiliation clauses.

Rowing Ireland is the recognised NGB for the sport of rowing in Ireland. It is recognised by Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, the Federation of Irish Sport, the Olympic Federation of Ireland and World Rowing.

Once a club is affiliated to Rowing Ireland the club is bound to observe the Rowing Ireland Rules which are available on Rowing Ireland's Website.

All official communication with Clubs is made via the club's secretary.

Every affiliated club is bound to comply with all Rowing Ireland's Rules and shall:

- Pay its annual affiliation fee on or before the 31st day of December of the year preceding the rowing season
- Pay any outstanding monies due
- Register its racing uniform colours and designs with Rowing Ireland
- Have a constitution which may be reviewed by Rowing Ireland
- Adhere to the objectives of Rowing Ireland
- Comply with Rules of Rowing Ireland
- Ensure every competitive rower is registered with Rowing Ireland for the current rowing calendar and appropriate fees are paid
- Provide Rowing Ireland with list of registered members
- Adhere to Rowing Ireland's policies and procedures

5 TYPES OF AFFILIATION AND CLUB VOTING RIGHTS

Senior:

This is a club with full, unrestricted affiliation and has full voting rights.

Junior:

This is a club which only competes at Junior level, and which has full voting rights. Any Junior Club entering an event other than at Junior level will immediately be invoiced for the difference between the Senior and Junior affiliation fee.

Restricted Third Level:

This is a club which only competes at the University Championships and which does not have voting rights.

Restricted School:

This is a club which only competes at specially designated schools event(s) and which does not have voting rights.

Restricted Coastal:

This is a club which only competes on the Coastal circuit and at the World Rowing Coastal Championships. It does not have voting rights.

ATTENDANCE AND VOTING AT ROWING IRELAND GENERAL MEETINGS



2 members from each affiliate club will be entitled to attend all general meetings of Rowing Ireland and of its regions.



1 member is entitled to vote on behalf of the member club.



Clubs should nominate by agreement (using the voting member nomination template) the member entitled to vote.



The club committee must agree internally how to cast votes and the club voting nominee shall cast all votes on behalf of the club.

CHAPTER THREE:

STRUCTURE OF YOUR CLUB

Legal Structure

Traditionally clubs were set up as volunteer committee structures with a club constitution and committee running its affairs. Sometimes these clubs also had trustees whose purpose was to hold club property on behalf of the club. Some clubs have also changed their structure into companies for the purpose of creating a separate club legal entity.

What is important is that you understand which legal structure your club has currently and if necessary, speak to your solicitor about that and consider if a new structure is needed.

Having the right legal structure provides clarity on roles and responsibilities of the club.

Types of Legal Structure

The legal structure outlines how the club is constituted in the eyes of the law. The club will either be incorporated (a company) or unincorporated (a committee without a company). It is important when you decide to improve your club governance that you know exactly how the club is structured and how new governance changes can be implemented.

TYPES OF LEGAL STRUCTURE

Incorporated/ Company

An incorporated club means it is legally set up and registered as a company in the Companies' Registration Office (ROI) or Companies House (NI). If you are a company then the club should have:

A Constitution (Memorandum and Articles of Association). This Constitution sets out the basis upon which the club operates and must be in compliance with company law



A Board of Directors (Committee) with directorships registered correctly



Compliance requirements under company law as well as other governance, legal and financial requirements



Club insurance to protect the club as a separate legal entity and directors insurance for the Board



Unincorporated

If the club is not incorporated as a company, then it is likely set up as a simple committee structure. If the club is unincorporated, then it should have:

A Constitution which sets out how the club is governed

A Committee which oversees the running of the club

Trustees may or may not be appointed to hold property (Clubhouse, Assets) in trust and for the benefit of the members of the club.

These may be set up by way of a Trust Deed and you should seek the advice of your solicitor to check this and the powers the Trustees may have Insurance for the committee members as individual members of the committee. Trustees should also be provided with insurance

CLUB CONSTITUTION

Regardless of the structure every club must have a constitution.

Legal advice should be sought in respect of the mandatory requirements for clubs set up as companies or clubs which wish to avail of sporting tax exemptions as specific clauses are needed to be present in your constitution in these cases.

For either structure the following should be clearly set out in the Constitution

1. Membership and affiliation to Rowing Ireland

8. Minimum number of times a year the Committee meet

2. General rules regarding admission and members rights

9. Procedures regarding meetings of the club

3. Objects of the club, its purpose etc

10. What is the quorum and how is voting managed

4. Committee membership

11. Role of the chair and high-level details on other key roles

5. Terms of office

12. How sub committees may be set up and delegated tasks and duties

6. Election procedures

13. Reference to any ancillary policies, codes and rules that must be complied with

7. Powers and remit of the Committee

14. Accounts and governance provisions

Licencing laws

If your club requires or operates a premises that requires an alcohol licence then you should consult with your Solicitor in order to ensure you are properly registered to use your premises for such purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CLUB COMMITTEE AND SUB COMMITTEES

The Committee

Clubs are managed and controlled by a committee which takes decisions on behalf of the members. Committees should provide leadership, direction, and guidance. The committee are ultimately responsible for ensuring good governance and financial oversight of the Club. The Committee take responsibility for ensuring member's interests are protected and decision-making works to achieve the clubs' objectives. Committees and members provide the necessary leadership to ensure the future viability of the club and sustainability into the future. Committees should not operate as private domains of any one set of individuals and should be open, accessible, and transparent. Clubs which are structured as a company are similarly run by a Board of Directors however, they may be commonly known as or referred to as a "committee" by the Club which is in order but should be aware that they are subject to additional legal and statutory obligations under the law.

Committees and committee members should always act in the best interest of the club. Clubs are there to serve members as a whole and should not be vested in the authority of any one individual or group of individuals

THE COMMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:



- Setting the overall strategy for the club
- Culture and leadership
- Governance and risk management
- Policy setting and implementation
- Compliance with law and regulations
- Appointing sub committees and their terms of reference
- Compliance with constitution
- Commercial decisions
- Membership policy
- Financial oversight and controls
- Employment/Services/Contractor engagement
- All legal and financial compliance

The committee will also have operational duties (the day to day running of the club) to manage. Such operational duties may be delegated to individuals, contractors, staff or working groups and may include;

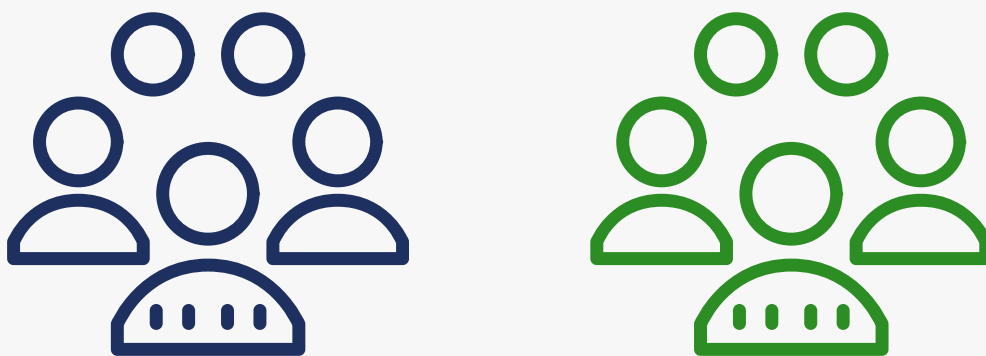
- Club administration
- Running events, programmes, training, competitions etc
- Facility / asset management
- Membership administration
- Communications and social media
- Financial accounts
- Marketing and commercial work
- Volunteer management
- Safeguarding

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE

In order to have an effective committee clubs should review;

Committee size:

While there are no legal requirements advising what size the Committee should be we recommend 8-10 members in order to be effective.



Committee Members and Skill set:

While everyone should be encouraged to step forward at all levels it is important that the committee has a combined unit has the necessary skills to effectively manage and operate the club. An appropriate mix of skills, experience and knowledge should exist on each committee. Each committee member should have clear roles and responsibilities and be able to work together as a team. Equally it is important when members offer their assistance that clubs find an appropriate role as we all know volunteers are not easy to come by.

One way of ensuring skills sets is to provide guidance to members on the type of roles and skills that the committee need on an annual basis. This can also issue to members in advance of elections.

Proactively identifying volunteers who are interested in running for election with specific skill sets is also a useful way to help strengthen committees but should be approved by the membership as part of the election procedures. Clubs can also include provisions in their constitution to allow committees to co-opt/appoint a specific number of individuals if some specific skill sets are needed.

THE CLUB SHOULD CONSIDER

What skills are needed?

Have we considered gender balance?

Are we diverse enough?

What leadership or other attributes do we need?

What commitment do members need to give?

Some skills to consider for membership of your committee are;

- Knowledge of rowing
- Administrative/ secretarial
- Membership/customer services
- Strategic
- Finance
- Legal/ governance/ regulatory
- Communications/ social media
- Commercial/ marketing
- Safeguarding
- Safety

Not every club will be able to cover all these skill sets and not every individual member of a committee needs to have more than one of these skills but clubs should keep this list in mind when seeking new committee members.

COMMITTEE ELECTIONS/ APPOINTMENTS

Committee members should be elected, appointed, or co-opted in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. Finding skills sets purely via an election process can be difficult but it is a matter for the club to determine what may work best. A mix of elections and co-options/appointments can be helpful to ensure a fair transparency process.

Every club should assess the needs for their club committee and decide on how best to populate these roles. Prior to elections it can be useful to set up a Nominations Sub Committee. This means the club is not over reliant on individuals putting themselves forward. This committee can help identify the skill sets needed and potentially encourage members to step up. This committee can also assist with promoting diversity and gender balance as research shows women for example are less inclined to run for election without being asked. This committee can also help set out the process for how the elections, nominations, eligibility, and ballot taking will be conducted so long as this is not in conflict with any provisions set out in the constitution.

Timelines for elections should be clear and issued to the membership well in advance of candidacy deadlines. Clubs should always try to encourage members to put themselves forward for election by providing information about the role, encouraging candidates to step up and publishing and advertising upcoming elections.

In cases where there are any concerns regarding how elections are to be run independent observers and scrutineers may be asked to assist (For example: Club Solicitor/Auditor/Rowing Ireland Representatives).

COMMITTEE ROLES - CHAIR / PRESIDENT

Rowing Ireland recommends the following positions to be filled in the Committee

Chair / President

Some clubs may have decided to combine this role together however clubs may decide to split these due to the skills that may be required to undertake each role. The role of the President is to represent the club and act as an ambassador for the club and they may or may not be a member of the committee.



The role of the chair is to manage the committee and provide good leadership. A chair should ultimately be responsible for bringing people together to work as a team for the betterment of the club and its members. Alongside this leadership role the chair is responsible to ensure the committee functions correctly and to conduct all meetings. This person should have leadership expertise and experience in chairing meetings and understand good governance practices. If at any meeting the chair is not present, clubs should have a clause within their constitution to appoint a temporary chair for that meeting.

COMMITTEE ROLES - CAPTAIN(S) AND VICE-CAPTAIN(S)

Captain

The role of the captain within rowing clubs has historically been one of the persons that deals with rowing specific issues such as;



Training times allocation



Coaches' appointments



Equipment allocation
for training and
competition



Boat allocation for
training and
competition



Minor conflict resolution



Crew entries to
competitions

The captain would normally be a member of the club committee and keep the committee informed of ongoing rowing related matters.

Vice-Captain

Large clubs may appoint vice captains that would assist the captain in performing their duties.

COMMITTEE ROLES

Treasurer/Finance Director

The Treasurer/Finance Director is responsible for the financial management of the club and should have a skill set and experience in finance and ensure financial planning and rigorous controls are in place. This individual should liaise with external advisors and auditors on all financial matters when required.

Secretary

The Secretary undertakes much of the club's administrative work. If the club is incorporated, then by law a Company Secretary must be appointed - this may be the Club Secretary (if they have the relevant experience). All official communications with Rowing Ireland is conducted via the registered Secretary.

Other Committee Members

These additional members should be elected, appointed/co-opted in accordance with the constitution of each club and generally at the AGM and should as a minimum include a;

- Safeguarding Designated Liaison Officer
- Safety Advisor

Directors

If a club is structured as a company, then the club will have a board which acts as the committee and each member of the committee including the roles outlined above will also be a legal director under company law.

Trustees

Some clubs may have trustees appointed to specifically hold assets on behalf of the club. Where a club has trustees, the club should seek legal advice on their role and their powers within the club.

GENDER BALANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR CLUB COMMITTEES

Research shows that having more women in leadership positions adds value by offering different perspectives and a broader range of opinions, which ultimately helps improve our decision making.

Rowing Ireland has created a minimum gender balance requirement at national and regional Level and strongly advocates that clubs also adopt the gender balance principle.

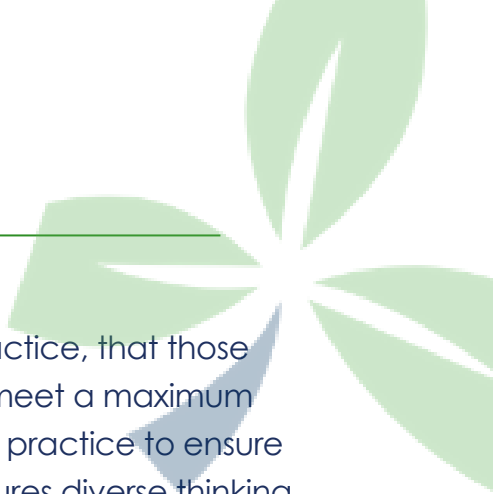
This means the club should have a minimum of 40% of one gender representation on their committee

For the avoidance of doubt, the target is not to reach 40% representation of one gender but 40% is a minimum requirement.

In meeting gender balance there should also be at least one female and one male holding an officer position in the club. At least one of the four elected positions should be held by a female and similarly at least one should be male.

Due to the disparity in membership numbers and voting rights between genders, clubs may need to proactively approach female members to put themselves forward and run campaigns that are designed to make these roles more attractive to women.

TERMS OF OFFICE



Although not a legal requirement it is good governance practice, that those who hold positions in the club should step aside once they meet a maximum term of office. While volunteers can be hard to find, it is best practice to ensure good rotation of people in key roles within the club. This ensures diverse thinking and transparency of succession. It is also important for clubs to encourage new members to put themselves forward. It is important when bringing in terms of office to also acknowledge the service of those that have served. Former committee members can still be involved on working groups or sub committees once term limits expire. Clubs should also consider how rotation will work as it is not good practice for all members to step away at the same time.

Rowing Ireland recommends clubs openly and actively put measures and communications in place which encourage members to put themselves forward for such roles. Rowing Ireland recommends a maximum term of six years (in total) for Committee positions, regardless of the type of position held previously. A step away provision of at least three years before someone becomes eligible again to hold a position on the committee may be introduced. Members who have already served for over six years may be asked to assist in other ways such on a subcommittee or return to the Committee once they have stepped away for the recommended period. This is fundamental for good governance.

Committee Effectiveness Review

It is also good practice for the committee to conduct its own review of how the year went and how the committee are operating. This is a self-review but can be useful to discuss what gaps or deficiencies there may be. It is also a good time for the committee to take stock of how the year went and celebrate club successes. The members can also be asked to provide feedback on the year and offer perspectives on areas they would like to focus on for the year ahead. Any feedback should not be taken as a direct criticism of the members or the chair but can help the club identify skills that may be needed going forward or to solidify that the committee is working well. It can be useful to have an external person conduct the review if necessary.

TERMS OF OFFICE

	Ordinary Term Length	Maximum Number of Terms	Maximum number of years in same position	Maximum years can serve
President(s)	1/2 Years		2	
Captain(s)	1 Year		2	
Chair & other officers (new with no prior service)	3 Years	2	6	6
Ordinary members	2 Years	3	4	6
A member stepping up as Chair	2 Years	Remaining balance of above Chair terms with cap of 6 years total service Examples: Served 1 years – 5 balance Served 2 years – 4 balance Served 3 years – 3 balance	Maximum 6 years both positions combined Note: Step down of 3 years required for all positions once 6 year max has been reached	

SUBCOMMITTEES

Subcommittees may also be established to manage operational matters such as competitions, membership, or for more regulatory matters like audit and risk, governance, HR and finances. Each subcommittee should report to the main committee. Committee members should have the necessary skills in the area involved and external experts may be brought in to assist on such committees. When setting up sub committees the club should try and ensure gender balance and also consider representatives from different sections of the membership.

Clubs should ensure each subcommittee:



Is properly approved and set up in accordance with the club constitution



Reports to the main committee



Has a term of reference listing its function and remit



Has support when as required (e.g.; financial, audit)



Has members with relevant expertise/skill sets



Keeps to an agreed meeting schedule



Has a broad representation of members



Keeps a record/minutes of its meetings

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee should have a term of reference to define its role and purpose outlining:

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----|---|
| 1. | How the Committee is constituted | 4. | Duties and remit |
| 2. | Quorum and meetings | 5. | Reporting practices |
| 3. | Role of Committee | 6. | Limits on its role and powers, if necessary |

Rowing Ireland is recommending the following sub committees (as a minimum) be set up:

- | | | | |
|----|----------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1. | Audit and Risk | 4. | Nominations (as required) |
| 2. | Governance | 5. | Disciplinary (as required) |
| 3. | Finance | | |

Other sub committees that could be established include:

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|------------------------------------|
| 1. | Business -
Commercial/Marketing/
Communications | 3. | Fixtures and
Competitions |
| 2. | Membership/Development | 4. | Regatta committee
(as required) |

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Working Groups:

These may be established for short term or specific projects by the Committee. They are similar to sub-committees in that they are accountable to the Committee, which can determine their membership.

STAFF

Clubs with staff (including coaches) should consider the following:



Clear lines of authority between the role of the committee and staff



Staff Induction



A staffing structure should be created alongside a staffing chart



Clear reporting lines



Up to date role descriptions for each member of the team



Training and continuous development opportunities



Employment contracts



Employer liability Insurance



Employee handbooks



Payroll and tax treatment

CHAPTER FIVE: INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

Rowing Ireland is committed to inclusivity and recognises the benefits of including, at all levels, a diverse group of individuals, with different backgrounds, personal experiences, values, and views.

Everyone deserves to be treated equally and have the opportunity to be involved in the club if they have the necessary skills. It is important to ensure that people are not being excluded or feel that they are being excluded. Rowing Ireland asks that the principles of inclusivity and diversity are adopted by all member clubs and representatives of Rowing Ireland. Rowing Ireland is committed to the principle and practice of promoting equal opportunities and celebrates the diversity of people.



GENDER EQUALITY

Gender Equality in sport means ensuring access and opportunity for all, regardless of their gender. In 2019, Sport Ireland launched an overarching Women in Sport Policy. In 2020, Rowing Ireland received funding to apply our own Women in Sport Strategy which included employing a full time 'women in sport officer'. The role of the officer is to lead women in sport initiatives that promote women in coaching, officiating, participating and in other volunteer roles. Since then, we have shown our commitment through the various leadership, coaching and participation programmes which have been successful and popular in the sport.

Why is gender equality so important for clubs?

A key reason to support gender equality is to try to slow and stop the rate of drop out of teenage girls from sport in general in Ireland. In order to ensure we keep these girls involved in sport for life is to ensure they have positive experiences and are equipped to engage with the sport in other ways too such as coaching, umpiring and leadership roles.

Rowing Ireland recognise that taking active steps to promote equal opportunity for women and girls in Rowing has many benefits for clubs. In 2022 Rowing Ireland undertook a broad piece of research which was participated in by 1115 members of the rowing community in Ireland. We wanted to understand how club culture influences gender inclusivity and equality in rowing clubs in Ireland.

There were a number of key findings around gender which can be read on our website.

What can your club do?

1. Download the club culture toolkit designed to tackle these challenges here
2. Enquire about our workshops by emailing womeninsport@rowingireland.ie
3. Engage with teenage girls and find out more about our current Women in Sport initiatives and programmes on our website
4. Support and encourage more female coaches in your club and make them feel valued. The World Rowing Women in Coaching Toolkit is an excellent resource to learn more about encouraging female coaches.

CHAPTER SIX: VOLUNTEERS

Rowing Ireland recognises the very important role that volunteers play in our sport. It is estimated that 450,000 volunteers each week help make sport happen in Ireland. Without our volunteers there would be no crews coached, races or regattas run, equipment provided or club administration tasks complete. The efforts made by our rowing volunteers are immeasurable in terms of worth to our sport.

Recruitment of volunteers is very important for clubs; it is important to induct and train our volunteers so that they understand how to do things and what is expected of them in terms of service and attitude.



DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Develop an action plan to identify volunteers and encourage them to become, and remain active within the club/organisation.

Your club should consider the following:

1. Decide why the club/organisation needs volunteers
2. Appoint a Volunteer Co-ordinator
3. Make links and work in partnership with local volunteer agencies and education establishments
4. Who are delivering leadership and volunteer training
5. Work out specific job requirements for volunteers and write role descriptors for each one
6. Decide what skills you need your volunteers to have
7. Decide how many volunteers you need
8. Decide which methods you will use to recruit volunteers
9. Go ahead and recruit
10. Meet and choose people with appropriate skills
11. Show them how to fulfil their roles and support them through the process
12. Involve volunteers in matters that affect them
13. Provide opportunities for training
14. Supervise and evaluate their performance and provide feedback
15. Reward and recognise volunteers appropriately
16. Review the process regularly and make the necessary changes
17. Say 'Thank you'

Ensure for the club's wellbeing and safety of all members and the volunteer themselves that any volunteer that is going to come into regular contact with junior members of your club, that they go through the Garda vetting process with Rowing Ireland.

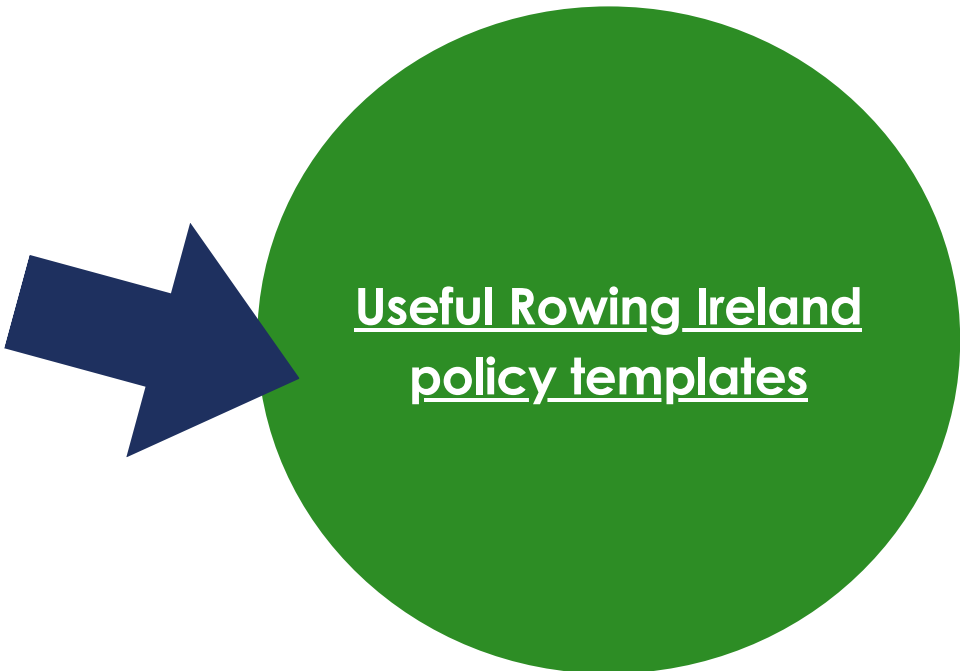
Be aware that individuals that require vetting for rowing activities must go through the Rowing Ireland Garda Vetting process. Being vetted for another organisation does not cover the club or the individual when taking part in rowing activities.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Rowing Ireland is very grateful and fully aware of the contribution made by the many volunteers involved in our sport. We have volunteers involved in many aspects of our sport, from local club involvement to regional and domestic committees, event organisers, umpires and officials including the Board of rowing Ireland these people involved in all aspects of our sport work tirelessly as volunteer to ensure the success of our sport nationally and internationally.

On behalf of the entire membership of Rowing Ireland we would like to say to the many thousands of volunteers that brought us to where we are, the ones that continue to be involved at present to ensure our future and to our future volunteers, THANK YOU for your efforts, time, knowledge and involvement.

Without our volunteer there would be no organisation, you make our team stronger, our sport safe, successful, and most importantly enjoyable.



Useful Rowing Ireland
policy templates

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CLUB STRATEGY/ CLUB OPERATIONS PLAN

Why is having a plan or strategy important?

Clubs are generally formed by volunteers with a passion for their sport and a real commitment to share this passion with others. Founding members of clubs want to showcase what their sport can offer, get people together in the community and provide guidance and programmes to others who want to participate. Having a club in place also ensures access to competitions and supports that passionate members would not otherwise have access to. As clubs mature and develop more structures and administrative tasks are necessary to keep the club sustainable into the future.

While many members and committees have great ideas about how their club can develop, many do not have a plan that is written down. Planning is essential to ensure everyone is working in the right direction and everyone understands the core purpose and priorities of the club. Without a written plan clubs run the risk of being over dependent on specific individuals taking responsibility for matters on an ad hoc basis rather than being led by a plan of action and clear set of objectives.

Having a solid plan can:

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1. | Ensure the club is going in the right direction | 6. | Ensure less dependency on ideas of individuals by embracing broader input |
| 2. | Help a club grow and embed itself into the community | 7. | Gives confidence to membership and provides transparency and accountability |
| 3. | Communicate to its membership, the wider community, to media and potential funders | 8. | Avoids ad hoc projects and ensures committees stick to the plan |
| 4. | Acknowledge and celebrate its achievements | 9. | Form part of good governance practices |
| 5. | Provide a clear pathway and succession plan for new committees | | |

One of the most important functions of a club committee is to ensure a club plan is put in place.



CLUB OPERATIONS PLAN

What is a club strategy and an operational plan?

A club strategy is essentially the 'What' and sets out the overall strategic objectives of the club for a period of time into the future. This could be for between 2 – 5 years. Strategic objectives are generally long term focused could include goals such as increasing membership, bringing in new programmes, funding objectives or facility related goals. Each objective should also be able to be measured and performance indicators agreed to keep track and evaluate if and when goals are met. Overall initiatives or actions which need to be taken to reach each objective should be set out. This part of the plan should also include the vision, mission and values of the club and the budget and resources available to drive the plan forward.

A club operational plan is really the plan in more detail and outlines the specific actions into more manageable and time sensitive tasks written down into a monthly or yearly plan. It also clearly sets out in more detail when an action will be completed, who is responsible and is backed up by sound financial budgeting and allocation of resources.

For larger organisations these are often separate plans or documents but for a small club the strategic plan can include the operational actions and timelines into one comprehensive club plan – the strategic and the operational together so it is easier and simpler to follow.

An operational plan is more often agreed on a yearly basis and sits under and drives the more longer-term strategic plan whereas the strategic plan is usually fixed for a longer period of time and does not change on a yearly basis but guides the annual operations of the club.

CLUB OPERATIONS PLAN

What should be included in a Strategic Plan?

- Club Vision: What do we want for the future or where do we want to be?
- Club Mission: What is our current purpose and role?
- Club Values: What is our culture and what principles do we embrace?
- Stakeholder Map: Who is important to our overall strategy?
- Core objectives/goals: What do we want to achieve over the next 2, 3, 4 or 5 years?
- Actions/ Initiatives: How do we achieve this and what overall actions are needed?
- Timeline and evaluation of overall objectives/goals
- Budget/ funding requirements

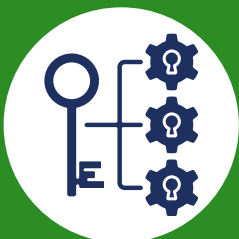
What should be included in the yearly operation part of the plan?



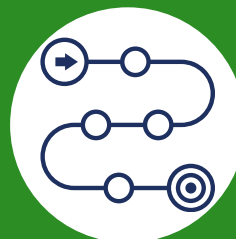
How to implement the strategic plan on a more detailed monthly/yearly basis



What is our annual budget for these actions?



Breaking down the actions into clear deliverable tasks



Setting out a detailed timeline to complete the actions



Who is responsible for each action?



Evaluation of the actions at year end

FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INCOME GENERATION

Having a financial committee that prepares budgets and identifies the needs of the club to remain sustainable is very important to all clubs. Having a fundraising committee that understands the needs of the club will result in a committee that is very motivated and focused because they understand the needs and wants of the club. A fundraising committee with no set goals or targets can easily become unmotivated and non-functioning.

All clubs need income to sustain their future, identifying people within your organisation that have the required skill and motivation to create opportunities to bring income into your club is a must for all successful clubs.



Consider the following guidance to generate income and ensure the long-term sustainability and stability of the club;

Income Generation	Note
Membership Subscription	Increase membership or increase subscription rate. (Many clubs under value the service and equipment they provide to their members).
Sponsorship	Events, Boats other equipment
Hosting Events (Regattas, Head of the River)	Hosting an event and enlisting the support of volunteers can be a successful way to raise funds through seat fees). Having each race sponsored by small local businesses can also increase the income from the event.
Summer Camps, Easter Camps	Your club has the coaches and the equipment available. As well as being a club income source it can also prove a great way to bring new members into the club.
Table quiz	Can also be used as a club information evening
Bag Packing	Easy way to make some money with very little outlay
Draws	For example, Christmas draw with prizes sponsored
Club Lotto's	A way of brining in a weekly income.
Cash for clobber	Second hand clothes collection, there are companies and websites where you can arrange the collection and sale of the clothes.
Fashion Shows	Can be lucrative, look for local shop and suppliers to be involved
Golf Classics	Members of you clubs or their parents or partners may be involved in you club and can assist in running these types of invents.
Dog nights	Local greyhound racing tracks can be used as a social night and a fundraiser.
Art auctions	Donations by club members can be auctioned off with profits going to the club.
Sponsored Rows (indoor or outdoor)	Use the many hours of erg use as a way to bring in added income through a sponsored row.
Renting Gym space	Many clubs have down times when their facilities are not being used there could be opportunities to get other members of the community involved by renting out your club house or gym for meeting and classes.
Buy a brick sponsor are roof tile	When building a new premises or doing a big renovation or extension this type of activity can bring in large amount of funding.
Dinner dances / Award nights	A club social night with profits going towards the running of the club
Club calendar	Can be used for individual crews for a special activity or piece of equipment that is required.

Remember thinking outside the box for fundraising ideas can be a great team building activity and can raise much needed funding.

FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INCOME GENERATION



Where do we start?

- Set up a working group to develop a plan
- Agree a timeline to complete the plan
- Examine other plans that may generate discussion
- Follow the template provided
- Consult with membership via survey, workshop or feedback as to key priorities
- Agree vision, mission and values as a core principle
- Understand the clubs resources and budget available so the plan is realistic
- Ask for advice and assistance if needed
- Ensure the committee signs off on the plan
- Present to the members and do not be afraid of feedback if things need to be changed.



CHAPTER EIGHT:

CLUB POLICIES

What are policies and why do clubs need them?

Not all operational and administrative matters can be outlined within a club constitution so it is good practice to have a suite of policies which sit alongside the club constitution and which provide guidance and procedures which the club follow and which the members should comply with. A club can have a number of policies in place dealing with a range of matters. Policies provide additional information on how the club deals with certain issues like its safeguarding practices, its data protection compliance, its complaints procedures, how it communicates and how it manages club funds.

A policy is effectively a document sets out the practice and procedure which the club will follow in a given situation or what standards the club expects of itself and the membership. Some policies will set out and follow legal provisions which may be required such as in the case of safeguarding, equality legislation or data protection while other policies may be practices the club operates such as how it manages membership, complaints, or volunteers. A club should try and ensure policies are implementable, easy to understand and are available for all members. It is good practice to have the majority of these available on the club website. Some policies may be internal only to the committee such as financial procedures which the committee may be operating

It is important that the club constitution clearly states that all members shall be bound by any policies or procedures that are in place. The fact that the club operates policies should be clearly signposted and referenced in the constitution and membership provisions, but they can sit as separate documents to the constitution itself. Club policies must align and not conflict with the club constitution. When introducing policies, it is important to ensure there is nothing in the constitution which conflicts with a new policy being introduced. A review of the constitution may be required.

Having policies in place also protect the club and its members when challenges arise and mitigate against risks and actions against the club.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Below is an example of recommended policies the club should put in place. Clubs may decide to implement other policies for specific purposes, and we encourage all clubs to do so if they feel a policy is needed to cover another area the club may be involved in.

Financial Controls Policy

The Committee is responsible for ensuring correct legal, tax and regulatory requirements are met for the financials of the club. The club should have a clear policy in place to set out how funds are managed, bank accounts held, signatories required, accounting and audit procedures and borrowing or other financial controls or powers the club may have. Any detailed matters relating to grants, tax, loans or borrowing policies can also be included but must comply with the club's constitution.

Insurance

Clubs should take advice to ensure they have the correct insurance policies in place. It is important to consult with your broker/insurance company and understand what cover is in place, what is the level of cover and where there may be gaps. It is also important to conduct an annual review and not simply renew without checking again that the cover is suitable. The risk register can assist your insurer in understanding the potential areas the club may need to consider.

Indemnity cover is important for directors, trustees and committee members. Insurance does not mitigate against all risks and claims processes can be difficult, so it is important the club is happy that the level of insurance is adequate

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Risk Assessments

As part of good governance, the club should conduct a risk assessment and keep a risk register. A risk assessment should be conducted in relation to 2 areas of club activities:

1. Safety Statement Risk Assessments

A Safety Statement is a written action programme for safeguarding the health and safety of members in and visitors to, the club. It details how health and safety is managed in the club, which for rowing clubs includes on land and on the water.

The Safety Statement is based on the principle that safety can be managed because most accidents and ill-health are foreseeable and can usually be prevented. The Safety Statement should be used to plan and control everything that is done in the club and by the club during training, recreational rowing or competition so that accidents don't occur.

A safety statement with risk assessments must be supplied to Rowing Ireland every year as part of the annual affiliation process. There is a rowing club safety statement with risk assessment template available on the Rowing Ireland website [Safety Statement template](#)

2. Club risk assessment

A business risk assessment should be undertaken and updated annually to analyse what risks the club may have. These risks may relate to - financial, legal, property, safeguarding, health and safety, membership, force majeure (pandemic), reputational etc.

3. Risk Register

A risk register should be produced following the risk assessments. This is a document which lists all the risks identified in the assessments and categorises them into low, medium and high risks. It also sets out how the Club intends to mitigate and manage potential risks. For example having an insurance policy for the risk of fire or having records of members participation in capsized drills or swim test to show the club identified the hazard of a possible capsize and reduced the risk by instructing members what to do in the case of capsize. The risk register should be regularly updated and should be a standing item for the Committee to review ideally every quarter.

These documents may be requested by insurance companies and for audit and funding purposes and is, in general, good practice.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Code of Conduct

The Rowing Ireland Code of Conduct details what is expected from individuals in terms of their commitment, loyalty, confidentiality, and behaviour. The code sets out the culture and environment under which the club operates and summarises behavioural expectations of those that are involved with the club. The code of conduct can also include a conflict of interest and loyalty section which deals with how conflicts are handled and asks individuals to register any potential conflicts they may happen. In sport, conflicts between individuals can be common, but it is important to note that having a conflict may not be an issue in itself (unless it undermines the individual's involvement in a position completely). Most conflicts can be dealt with by acknowledging them and individuals stepping away from decisions and discussions on particular subjects when they arise. Clubs may also wish to have a member's code in place which clearly sets out the club's expectations of behaviour from its members. Clubs may also wish to have a participant's code for anyone who is not a member but is taking part in club activities or for parents / guardians whose children may be involved.

In any event, all club members and other people like parents/guardians, volunteers should all be made aware of the Rowing Ireland Code of Conduct which sets out clearly the behavioural standards that apply to them at all times while being involved with rowing. This can be done by posting a notice in the clubhouse signposting people to the information, and having a copy of the Rowing Ireland Code of Conduct available within the clubhouse.

Matters Reserved for the Committee V the Membership

It is good practice to have a schedule or list of items that are exclusively reserved for the committee to deal with or to make a decision on. This will help the club avoid unnecessary conflict and for members to understand what matters must be put before an AGM / EGM or what the committee can determine itself. For example, agreeing what bank to use or the signatories for accounts can be decided upon by the committee whereas borrowing or lending money should be put to the membership.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Data Protection Policy/GDPR

Clubs need to have a robust Data Protection Policy/ GDPR (the EU's General Data Protection Regulation) in place. This will require the club to undertake a data mapping exercise which will establish a list of exactly what data the club holds or collects, for what reason and for what length. Data can be as simple as holding an email address or phone number of a member or more complex such as bank account details or medical information.

The Data Protection Policy may be different for each club depending on what activities they undertake and what data is collected from individuals. The policy must clearly outline how it complies with the law and in particular for what purpose its holds the data for each data point and for how long. Clubs should also detail when and how it deletes data and the security it has in place. It is a complex area and may require the Club to take some external advice and training on the matter.

Employment Handbook

If the club has employees, it will need to have a staff handbook which set out a list of policies and procedures applicable to staff. These must comply with employment legislation. Matters such as recruitment, induction, training, sick pay, leave, appraisals and the grievance and disciplinary procedures would normally be included.

Safety Statement and Health and Safety Policy

Clubs are required to have a safety statement which is visible to members. The Health & Safety policy sits along with this and sets out the health and safety protocols and procedures a club will follow in relation to all its activities. It should also review the clubs offices, property and examine specific details on any hazards that may exist and how these are managed. It will also set out what the club should do in case of an accident.

An individual should be identified as responsible for health and safety and first aid within the policy. Someone with experience in health and safety should be asked to conduct a visit and assessment and assist with the policy.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Business Continuity Policy/ Disaster recovery

As occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, many clubs closed, and business had to stop. A business continuity policy will set out what happens in such circumstances. When business is interrupted this can be very helpful particularly in cases of crisis and emergency including injury or death, an accident, loss of data, cyber-attack etc.

This policy would list information such as:



Fire safety and first aid plans.



Backup plans for data.



Emergency contact list.



Who manages public relations.



Who is responsible for particular areas.



How we continue activities.

Equality Policy

to comply with equality legislation the club needs to have an equality policy to ensure there is no discrimination against any individual or group. Clubs are legally bound by the Equal Status Acts in Ireland and a set of legislation and complaints mechanisms in Northern Ireland.

It is important that clubs understand their anti-discrimination obligations. Clubs should ensure matters relating to its equality policy are examined and any concerns or issues around equality in the club are immediately advised to the committee for review and action.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation Policy

Allegations around matters such as bullying and harassment can be very damaging for a club and can undermine confidence and trust at all levels. What is important for the club is to set out a clear and fair process for how issues will be reported, managed and ideally resolved.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Volunteer Policy

Given the number of volunteers clubs engage with it is good practice to have a clear policy in place when an individual becomes engaged with the club for the first time. This policy can act as a signal for volunteers as to what is expected from them and the various policies that apply to them as volunteers for the club.

Social Media Policy

Social media use is now commonplace and a policy can be a helpful tool to provide guidance and advice to our committee members. While clubs cannot police and control what the general public may say with regard to the club on social media, they can set guidance for members and committee members. Clubs can remind everyone of who is authorised to make official social media posts and who is not. Normally staff will have their own social media policy within the employee handbook.

Communications Policy

A good communications policy can make it clear who is the spokesperson for the club, how media queries will be dealt with, how announcements are made and who should engage on behalf of the club. It can help to lay out the process of how committees will be updated and who is ultimately responsible for the clubs messaging.

Internet and Email Policy

Staff will have their own policy regarding internet and email practices, however it may be the case that your club has provided volunteers access to servers and email addresses. If this is the case, then a club should have a policy with regard to data ownership and how data is shared and kept confidential.

Gifts Policy

In good governance a high standard of ethics is now expected across all areas. In sport it can be commonplace for gifts to be exchanged. A policy can set out the level of monetary value that gifts should not exceed before having to be reported, the level that the club itself will not spend on gifts and who is authorised to agree to the purchase or presentation of gifts. Gifts can also cause disquiet if they are regularly kept by certain individuals.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?

Safeguarding/ Child Welfare Policy

The policy will outline the clubs process with regard to vetting procedures and the overall position with regard to safeguarding. It should also cover vulnerable adults. The policy should also clearly state how matters will be handled, by whom and the responsibilities for reporting in line with current legislation. It should also set out how stand down order and suspensions are handled and the Clubs policy on Safeguarding training and vetting. Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport (2019) which follows Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017) and Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017) sets out requirements on recruiting and working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Every club must have a policy in that regard and committee members should be familiar with their obligations. Clubs should have a Children's Officer and a Designated Liaison Person who is separate to the children's officer (if possible) to ensure the required reporting procedures are followed and to report any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to the duty social worker in the Child and Family Agency/Tusla or an Garda Síochána/Gateway team or the PSNI.

Whistleblowing Policy / Protected Disclosures

This allows any staff to raise concerns in confidence about possible improprieties about matters of public interest and sets out what protections are afforded to whistle-blowers under legislation and what procedures should be followed in such cases.

Disciplinary and Grievance Policy

It is important that Clubs also have a Disciplinary and Grievance policy in place for its members and volunteers separate to any staff policy. This will set out how complaints and disputes or breaches of policies will be handled. It helps protect the club by setting out a roadmap re the process the club will follow in such cases. The principles of natural justice and fairness must be to the forefront when clubs engage in these matters which can sometimes lead to legal proceedings.

WHAT TYPE OF POLICIES SHOULD A CLUB CONSIDER?



Lobbying Policy

If the club is undertaking in any lobbying activity (i.e. lobbying a 'designated public official' about purchase of land, policy changes, legal changes, grants etc) you may be required to register as an organisation that partakes in lobbying and file a quarterly return. The sipo.ie website provides guidance on whether you should register or not and what constitutes lobbying activity.

Induction Policy

Clubs should ensure their committee members have an induction procedure and pack issued with the key documents provided to them as listed above. It may also include that last set of minutes for the committee they are sitting on. Induction packs can be large so they can be done via a drop box or email link. It is also important for the chair of the committee to discuss the new role with them and ensure they have all the information they require

Inclusion/ Disability Policy

This Policy sets out the Clubs commitment to all people with disabilities and outlines how our Club will facilitate the inclusion of those with disabilities in developing and offering activities. The policy should also include any Club training providing, details of who is responsible for enquires and our general access policy in respect of our facility and equipment.

Gender

It is also good practice for clubs to ensure its constitution and policies are updated to ensure gender neutral language is used throughout. Chairman for example being amended to 'Chair'

CHAPTER NINE:

RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Role of Chair

The role of the Chair is to agree and set the agenda with input from the secretary (or managing staff if any) or taking into account matters which may need to be addressed or which have been raised by members. The Chair sets the tone for the meeting, the agenda and the timings. It is good practice to ensure a set amount of time is divided as appropriate to each agenda item to ensure all matters receive adequate attention. The key to a well-run board meeting is a strong chair and a well-planned agenda. The chair should:

- Insist papers have been read in advance so time is not wasted reading through material
- Control how the meeting is run and the speaking time for member's present avoiding too many discussions running over or any monopoly in conversations
- Encourage an open transparent meeting, seek out questions on topics and ensure each member feels they can contribute to the discussion.
- Avoid matters being brought to the table as "fait accompli" (already decided), encourage individual contributions and avoid group thinking. Ultimately the decision will be made by the majority if that is what the Constitution stipulates but a robust discussion in a constructive rather than disruptive manner should take place.
- Call out poor behaviour when necessary and resolve conflicts where possible.

Meeting Schedule

It is good practice to try agree a meeting schedule for the year ahead or at least for the next 6 months and ensure the dates are secured in peoples diaries. Meetings should be held for the minimum number of times set out in the constitution, but good practice would be at least every 4-6 weeks depending on the nature of the committee. In smaller Clubs it may meet more regularly as it may be more operationally involved.

Agenda

An agenda might include:

- The minutes of the last meeting
- Matters arising from minutes
- Outstanding action points
- Update on Club activities
- Strategic issues
- Financial updates
- Governance updates
- Risk Register update
- Rowing committee issues
- Membership/Stakeholder issues
- Project work

It is good practice to identify matters on the Agenda which are for discussion or for note or matters which may require a decision.

RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

AOB – Any other business

Many agendas end with Any Other Business (AOB), however, unless a matter is very urgent, it is not recommended to include this as an agenda item as it increases the risk of committee members using AOB for their own purposes, which can lead to a “bomb” or unforeseen item being dropped at the end of the meeting which can influence the entire atmosphere of the meeting which can be difficult to turn around.

Instead it is recommended that if a member feels something needs to be added to the agenda after it has been circulated they should be encouraged to raise it with the Chair who has the option of trying to fit it in or keeping it for another meeting. If clubs choose to keep AOB it is recommended that there is an agreement in place that it will only be used as a way of raising issues for discussion at a future meeting or elsewhere.

Notice of Meetings, Papers and Attendance

Clubs should ensure adequate notice is provided for its meetings and how it has been agreed notice should issue e.g. via email. The secretary should take note of attendance. Members should ensure they give apologies if they are unable to attend but the chair should raise any repeated failure to attend with the relevant member. Papers should be issued a number of days in advance if possible and ideally each agenda item should have a memo or paper attached outlining what the discussion is about. It would be normal for key staff or (if any) to also attend meetings and provide an update on the activities at operation level. Other advisors may be invited to attend to present or give guidance on certain agenda items.

Minutes

The secretary should take minutes in an agreed standard format which outline key discussions and decisions of the committee and any follow up actions necessary. Minutes do not need to be verbatim what was said at the meeting but an overall indication of what was discussed under each agenda item and the outcome or decisions relating to same. The chair should review the minutes and may offer guidance on what detail should be recorded. Key matters especially around financial decisions must be properly recorded. There is no need to attribute comments to particular individuals however members may wish individual concerns are recorded. The final decision of the committee however is collective even if not everyone agreed. Minutes are normally approved at the next meeting and signed by the chair.

GENERAL MEETINGS

General Meetings AGM/EGM

Clubs must hold general meetings of all members in accordance with their constitution. This is legally mandatory if a club is a company and certain legal requirements must be followed. The key to running a good meeting is proper planning, timing and communication with members. It is important the meeting is set up correctly, chaired in a professional manner and there are no surprises for members which could generate a bad outcome. If there are key decisions to be made at such meetings (e.g. changes to the Constitution or an important club policy) consideration should be given to advance consultation with members before springing matters on them at a general meeting.

An AGM should include:



Overview of financial statements



Appointment of the auditors and setting fees where relevant



Clubs activities report



Elections

An EGM is generally held in accordance with the Club Constitution for urgent matters.

Managing Change

Successfully leading others through the change process is not an easy task, some people within the club will view any element of change in a negative light, they may feel that they are losing something they currently have in order for others to gain. It is important that individuals within the committee navigate their way through the discomfort that comes with change, and this can be done by helping members understand that remaining stagnant comes at a much greater long-term cost than implementing change.

As implementing any level of significant change can take time it is important that:

1. A timeline is agreed.
2. Members are updated as to the work being undertaken so any change is not sudden or unexpected.
3. Those on the committee are trusted by the membership to be acting in the best interests of the club as a whole when recommending changes.
4. While taking feedback it is equally important that a committee do not get side tracked and unduly delayed by any individual issues or cases raised.

CHAPTER TEN:

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

The committee can take a number of initial actions to ensure governance is at the forefront of club culture:

Start by setting up a governance committee. The committee should agree who in the club should sit on a governance committee. This can be made up of members of the main committee or include other members who may have skills or expertise or an interest in this area.

This governance committee should:

- Agree a terms of reference for the work the committee will undertake
- Consult with the members in relation to governance and any changes that may impact them
- Review the existing club governance and understand where the club is currently positioned
- Identify a list of gaps that the club may need to work on
- Make recommendations to the main committee on changes to be adopted
- Create an action plan and timeline to implement change
- Divide up the workload and agree who is responsible for which elements
- Bring forward any constitutional changes to your EGM/ AGM

Using this guide and the templates the governance sub committee should:

- Identify a list of governance tasks which need to be completed.
- Identify which tasks may be easier than others to implement.
- Identify which governance tasks may require approval from the club membership (e.g. changes to constitution) and those which can be implemented more easily at committee level (e.g. introducing a policy or procedure).
- Delegate tasks between the committee members or delegate to others in the Club including any staff who may be able to help.

Governance can always be improved so once the building blocks are put in place practices and policies can be continually upgraded to take account of any specific issues which arise but these should not delay putting good governance practices in place to begin with.





ROWING IRELAND

GOVERNANCE GUIDE

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