



**COMMUNITY ACTION**  
**Bradford & District**  
Making a Positive Change

## Making Decisions

Making decisions in a fair way is part of good governance. Community groups and charities are governed by volunteers who make the decisions on how to spend funds and how to achieve the organisation's aims and objectives.

These volunteers can be called committee members or trustees. Together, they may decide that the organisation should employ staff or sessional workers to carry out some of its work but the people in charge of the organisation are the committee/ trustees. There is no one above them. The committee/ trustees manage the staff.

Committee member/trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for making decisions, and ensuring that the organisation is solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.

### Read your governing document

- How to make decisions is part of the instructions you need to follow in the organisation's governing document (constitution or mem & arts). Read the governing document to find out:
- How many people you need to make a decision (this number is called a "quorum").
- How much notice you need to give of meetings (including the AGM).
- How often meetings need to take place.
- Who has to be included in decisions (sometimes it will just be the committee/trustees, sometimes there is a wider membership that also has a say).
- Who can be a member of the organisation.
- Whether or not you can make decisions outside of a meeting.



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## Deal with conflicts of interest

The governing document will also include basic instructions on what to do if there is a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is when the committee is making a decision that would mean:

- A committee member/ trustee could benefit financially (either directly or through someone they are connected to).
- A committee member/ trustee's duty to the charity competes with a duty or loyalty they have to another organisation or person.

Examples of where groups have got stuck with a conflict of interest:

- A committee member, other volunteer or their family member wants to apply for a paid job with the group.
- A committee member wants to recommend a company or individual to carry out work for example building improvements or building a website.
- A committee member is related to other people on the board, members of staff or volunteers.
- A committee member is having a romantic relationship with other people on the board, members of staff or volunteers.
- A committee member owns property that it rents to the organisation.

All of these conflicts of interest can be managed but they make the situation complicated and decisions need to be fair and be seen to be fair.

For example, even if you follow all the procedures, will it really look fair to your beneficiaries/ local community/ funders to hire the child of one of your committee to a paid role? If something goes wrong with building improvements but the builder is in a romantic relationship with one of your committee, how will you deal with the situation? If there is a married couple or siblings on your committee does that make it more difficult for others to speak up/ disagree?

In most cases, it is much better to just avoid the conflict of interest in the first place by checking conflicts of interest and making different decisions.



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## Action to take

There is a charity governance code you can refer to for more information about this topic, but remember, the actual instructions you need to follow are your own governing document (sometimes called a constitution).

Make sure that:

- All committee members or trustees have a copy of the governing document.
- Committee members or trustees are reminded that they need to read the governing document and follow its instructions.
- There is a copy of the governing document available to refer to at every committee meeting.



@WeAreCabad



info@cabad.org.uk



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