

Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster

County Secretary Role Description and Guidelines

Reviewed September 2007

Introduction

The Secretary is the backbone of any County committee within the YFCU. His or her single most important duty is to communicate effectively with members and officials within the County, the wider YFCU family or with external organisations or individuals. Skills such as letter writing, dealing with correspondence, taking or reading minutes are only a part of this communication process. With effective communication, the County can flourish. As secretary you have the pivotal role in ensuring that this is the case in your County during your period of office.

Role Description

As County Secretary you need to do the following:

Show Leadership

- By attending County meetings, Club & County Events
- Attend office bearer training and assist in Club Office bearer training
- Support a teamwork ethos, at all times

Be informed

- Read the Associations Policies & Guidelines (in handbook), implement them and be in a position to inform others

Promote Planning

- You should play a strong part in the County planning process and specifically in circulating the plan to clubs and Headquarters.

Promote Teamwork

- Involve assistants and delegate tasks to encourage and involve other officials and members in County run activities.

Administration

- You have the responsibility for the administrative duties of the County committee including the preparation, writing and circulating agendas, writing letters on behalf of the club and taking minutes.

Be Objective

- Do not allow your opinion or the opinion of others to colour your projected aims and in so doing be mindful of the aims and objectives of the organisation and your role thereon.

Outside Meetings

- Remember 60% of the work by an elected official is done outside the club meeting; the other 40 % is spent communicating, encouraging debate or gaining feedback at the meeting.

Be Positive

- The main enemy of any organisation is negativity; do not allow this to set in.

Avoid Burn Out

- While it is important to be committed to your role you must avoid 'burn out' by trying to do too much.
- It is important to seek help during busy periods. Your role should be enjoyable and not become a chore.

Task List

What does the County Secretary do?

Before Meetings:

- Draw up the agenda with the Chairman and/or Club Leader
- Check or book the venue and any speakers or guests for the meeting.
- Notify Headquarters of the time, date and venue well in advance (minimum 4 weeks) and ask that committee members are forwarded minutes of the last meeting and an agenda.
- Summarise lengthy correspondence.

During Meetings:

- Arrive in good time with the equipment to carry out your work.
- Read the minutes loud and clear (if they have not been circulated) and when they are adopted obtain the Chairman's signature on them.
- Circulate a sign in sheet to those present and apologise for those who have said that they will be absent.
- Read correspondence and /or summarise if necessary.
- Take notes from the meeting for the minutes.
- Make sure all proposals and decisions are recorded.
- Record the names of people assigned responsibilities and/or duties.

After Meetings:

- Write up the minutes ASAP while they are still fresh in your mind.
- Answer correspondence.
- Write any necessary letters.
- Keep a record of all expenses and notify the Treasurer of these.

In addition to meeting the County Secretary should...

- Consult with previous County Secretary (if newly elected) and familiarise yourself with your role.
- Regularly read and honestly answer twenty-one questions for self appraisal.
- Make contact and liaise with YFCU Staff team at Headquarters.
- Make contact and liaise with office bearers from other counties and the YFCU Presidential team.
- Acquire contacts and contact details of all County Officials and YFCU Presidential team (e-mail addresses included).
- Establish suitable and workable methods of contacting the County Officials & Club Officials in your County.
- Regularly review and evaluate the County Communications Strategy for members, elected officials and volunteers so it is always effective.
- Read the Associations Policies and guidelines, implement them and be in a position to inform others.
- Plan, co-ordinate and attend all County Committee & Sub-Committee meetings. (At least four full committee meetings, an AGM and Sub-committee meetings as needed)
- Plan and co-ordinate the Committees annual programme of events in partnership with the Chairman and other officials.
- Assist with and co-ordinate Club Office Bearer training.
- Encourage & Support other Club Officers regularly.
- Seek out replacement Secretary if you are finishing your term of office in readiness for Club AGM
- Write up AGM and Annual report.
- Seek out leaders & potential County Officials and encourage them to go forward for particularly suited positions.
- Prime new Secretary in readiness to continue on where you have left off.
- Read and honestly answer twenty-one questions for self appraisal again!

Administration

What's involved?

- Responsibility for correspondence in and out
- Preparing agenda following consultation with the Chairman
- Booking venues
- Recording and keeping minutes of meetings
- Reading correspondence at meetings
- Acting promptly on correspondence
- Completing forms accurately and ensuring they are within deadlines
- Inviting guests and ensuring that they are made welcome.
- Preparing an Annual Report for presentation at the AGM
- Working closely with the Chairman and Club Leader to ensure that events and meetings run smoothly
- Receiving and dealing with correspondence from Headquarters
- Ensuring an accurate roll of attendance is record for each meeting and that all names and addresses, telephone numbers and dates of birth are up to date

What you need to be an Effective Administrator:

- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of Club, County and Central officials, YFCU Headquarters and the names and responsibilities of Staff
- List of the Clubs in the County and in the Association.
- Knowledge of recent history of the County, what worked well, what did not? What events were successful, which were not?
- A detailed knowledge of YFCU structures, at Club, County and Central level.
- Knowledge of the Objectives of the organisation and how these can be achieved.
- Knowledge of the County's procedures
- Insurance

Agenda Setting

The agenda should be circulated at least 10 working days before a County meeting. It should be circulated to all the County officials, Club Secretaries and Headquarters. The agenda should be drawn up in consultation with the Chairman and Club Leader.

A typical example of an agenda is as follows:

**13 Ashgrove,
Wonderland,
Co Armagh
BT10 20XX**

Dear Committee Member,

A meeting of Armagh County Committee will be held in the Castle Hotel, Markethill on Monday the 15th of October, 2007 at 8.00 p.m. sharp.

Agenda

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Adoption of Agenda**
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting**
- 4. Matters arising from minutes**
- 5. Correspondence**
- 6. County Committee Business**
- 7. Reports**
- 8. Headquarters Business**
- 9. Any Other Business**
- 10. Date of Next Meeting**
- 11. Close**

All County & Club officials expected to be in attendance.

**Yours Sincerely
Noelle Kalvin
County Secretary**

Meeting Procedures

The items on any Agenda should be:-

1. Open Meeting

It is important for the presiding chairman to declare the meeting open and welcome members attending so that it is clear that the meeting has commenced.

2. Adoption of Agenda

This gives the members a chance to propose the addition of items to the Agenda subject to the approval of the meeting. The Agenda should be proposed and seconded with the proposer and seconder being recorded in the minutes.

3. Apologies

It is important to ask other members of the club if anyone has passed on an apology for being unable to attend the meeting. These should be noted in the meeting book.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

These should be circulated in advance (if possible) to give members an opportunity to consider them before they are approved. The minutes require a proposer and seconder whose names should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the minutes are ratified.

Minutes should be brief but must record the attendance at the meeting, any correspondence received, all decisions taken, any actions to be taken and who is undertake them.

N.B. The minutes only become the official record of the meeting when they are passed at the next meeting. Once they are passed they become the legal record of the proceedings of the meeting. They should be signed by the Chairman and stored for safe keeping in an official minute book. If there are changes to be made to the previous minutes they must be changed and then approved with any changes.

5. Matters Arising (From the minutes)

Once the minutes have been approved the next item should be matters arising. Under matters arising, the Chairman, secretary or any other individual or group who has been given responsibility for carrying out an action point from the previous meeting should update the meeting on their progress. The Chairman should start by outlining his/her progress on matters they have taken responsibility for and then call on the other individuals or groups to give their updates.

If a matter or report in the minutes is on the agenda for later in the meeting then it should not be discussed under matters arising but deferred until that item comes up for discussion.

N.B. Matters arising is an extremely important part of any meeting as it ensures that decisions taken by previous meetings are properly followed up. If they are not then meetings become a waste of time!

6. Correspondence

Correspondence should be read by the secretary, who should be familiar with it in advance in order to be in a position to summarise where possible in order to save time.

7. Main Items on the Agenda (County Business)

This section of the Agenda should be decided by the secretary in consultation with the Chairman. Wherever possible these items should be circulated to club members (this should be regarded at best practice). If not, a sole item 'County Business' will appear on the agenda and the items agreed on the adoption of the agenda.

8. Reports

This section of the Agenda allows for the County Treasurer to give an update on the financial status of the Committee and the profit and loss on events which have been completed.

Committee members elected on to YFCU central and other committees will also report on any meetings they have attended since the last meeting.

The County Public Relations Officer should also report on any publicity the County has received since the last meeting.

County Officials should report any matters they deem relevant.

9. Headquarters Business

At this point in the meeting the staff member(s) in attendance will update the committee on what is happening across the Association. He/She will also consult or raise any matters which the staff or Presidential team feel the committee needs to be aware of or discuss.

10. Any Other Business

Any Other Business (AOB) provides the ordinary members with an opportunity to raise brief points. If a member has a major issue which they want discussed, then they should propose at the start of the meeting (when the agenda is being adopted) so that the matter can be added to the Agenda. In general if the Chairman considers a point raised under AOB is an important but non-urgent matter that will take some time, they should suggest that the issue be added to the agenda for the next meeting, rather than spending a lot of time on the issue at the end of the current meeting.

In general it is a sign of a poorly planned meeting if a lot of matters are being raised under AOB. A long AOB is one of the main reasons why meetings drag on.

11. Close of Meeting

The meeting should be officially declared closed at the end and members attending thanked for their contribution.

Minutes

Accurate minutes are central to the smooth running of the club. There is no need for a secretary to record every little detail that went on at the meeting, instead a record should be taken of:

- Each item discussed
- Proposers and Seconders where necessary
- Any decisions taken
- The persons or groups responsible for the actions to be taken

Criteria for Taking Minutes:

- Write in note form at the meeting
- Ensure that all decisions taken are recorded
- If unsure of any information, decisions or who is to carry out actions, ask for it to be repeated or clarified.
- Note all tasks to be undertaken and who has responsibility for each task and when they are to be carried out by if relevant.
- Do not be afraid to ask the chair to slow down the pace of the meeting if you feel you are finding it difficult to keep with your notes.
- Remember that you are also a key leader in your club, it is important that you give your opinion on points being discussed. You are a participant in the meeting as well as the person recording the minutes.

Criteria for Writing Minutes:

- Minutes should be clear and to the point
- Minutes should be an accurate account of what happened at the last meeting.
- Avoid long-winded type essay accounts
- Record names of those that proposed and seconded all decisions and reports
- The layout should correspond to the layout of the Agenda
- The minutes should be written up into the minutes book and should be signed and dated by the Chairman of the meeting where they are agreed.
- Do not be afraid to ask for advice on minute writing from Headquarters.

Refer to "Minute Taker" & "Minute Reporter" templates viewable in the Appendices 1 and 2 and may be downloaded from the "YFCU Website"

Sample Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of County Armagh Committee September 29th, 2007 in Collone YFC Hall.

1. Introduction

The Chairman declared the meeting opened at 8.30 pm. And welcome members attending the meeting

Attendance

White -Chairman; B. Greene -PRO; C. Black -Treasurer; F O'Malley – Secretary; D. Brown. Clubs Represented were (contact from each club) John Ford, -Ballybanoffy club etc. The Total Attendance was 35 altogether.

Apologies

E Grey -Vice Chairperson

2. Adoption of Agenda

As circulated

Proposed:- B. Greene

Seconded:- D. Brown

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Agreed as circulated

Proposed:- C. Black

Seconded:- B Greene

4. Matters Arising

The treasurer reported that the outstanding sponsorship monies as highlighted at the last meeting had now been forwarded to the county committee.

5. Correspondence

Letter from Mary Murphy head of training and development re County officer training. The fee has been set at € XX and indicating a closing date of September 10th for return of booking forms. The Chairman asked all officers to make a special effort to attend. It was agreed that Officers would indicate at the next committee meeting whether or not they would be attending.

A Letter from AIB representative Mr. Hugh Rich thanking the County for their hospitality at the recent dinner dance.

6. Other Agenda Specified Business

6.1 County Fundraiser

A detailed discussion took place on ideas for a club fundraiser. Following various suggestions it was agreed to hold a race night in October. The secretary was to check the availability of Seskinore YFC Hall on Friday nights during October and the treasurer was to source quotes for printing of race-cards and tickets. The details are to be finalised at the upcoming club committee meeting after which details are to be forwarded to members.

6.2 Public Speaking

The Chairman reminded people that the County had prioritised the public speaking competition for this year and he asked all members to participate in the competition this year.

7. Reports

Treasurers Report

Club Bank Current Account balance is £400. This months outgoings included..... Income included County fundraiser made..... Profit & Loss on each of the following events was

8. A.O.B.

D Brown informed the meeting that Ballybanoffi club would be holding a table quiz on September 1st in the parish hall in Ballybanoffi and he asked all clubs to support the event.

9. Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm. The next club meeting will be in the Glens YFC hall at 8.30 Sharp on November 16th 2007

Letters

As secretary it is your job to write any correspondence on behalf of your club. You also have responsibility for dealing with incoming correspondence and ensuring that items are brought to the attention of the relevant officials, committees or members.

Incoming Letters:

- All letters, which the County secretary receives, should be filed and brought to the meeting. Check if the correspondence requires urgent attention. If it does you need to bring it to the chairman's attention and decide on a course of action.
- All letters should be read in advance and summarised.
- It is recommended that the chairman and secretary go through the correspondence before the meeting.
- The correspondence should be read aloud by the secretary when asked by the Chairman.
- Record decisions taken if matters arise from the correspondence. It is often useful to actually write a note on the correspondence outlining what decision was taken in relation to it.

Writing Letters:

- Letters should be short concise and to the point.
- Use County headed notepaper.
- Identify the Committee on whose behalf you are writing.
- Give a contact name and telephone number. Stick to the point.
- Keep a copy of all outgoing correspondence.
- Don't be afraid to ask your predecessor, another official or member of YFCU staff for help or guidance with a letter particularly if it is of a sensitive nature.

Filing and Keeping Records

Each secretary should maintain a filing system for the County. This system must be clear and concise so that relevant details can be handed over to their successor.

There are several systems that may be used but the simplest are either a Lever Arch File with dividers or a box file.

Before setting up a system of record keeping, decide which records need to be kept. Secretaries should make a point of reading the YFCU Confidentiality Policy which sets the parameters for record keeping in the Association

Documents of a sensitive nature may be forwarded to Headquarters for safe keeping (ask Headquarters Staff for details)

Records which should be kept:

- Lists of names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth and contact details for members of the club.
- Lists of names, addresses and telephone numbers of all relevant contacts e.g. Macra HQ, County Officials, Guest speakers, Judges
- County Activities :
 - A copy of your County Plan.
 - A copy of the County Programme.
 - Copies of Club Programmes from the County.
- All correspondence sent and received from/by the County.
- Copies of attendance lists at club clinics and Club officer training.
- Expenses incurred in carrying out your role as secretary.

Appendix 1: Sample “Minute Taker” Template

Minutes taken by: _____

Date: _____

Type of meeting (e.g. Club meeting, County/Central etc)

Attendance at meeting

Names

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Apologies

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Time meeting started _____

| Item/Issue | Discussion | Decision | Person (s) Responsible | Time Scale (if applicable) | Proposer | Second |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | | | | | |

Meeting:
Venue:
Date:
Page

Appendix 2: Sample “Minute Report” Template

Sample Minutes & Recording Template

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Meeting of County: | | |
| Held in: | | |
| Date: | | |

1. Introduction

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| The Chairman declared the meeting opened at: | | pm. |
| <i>In Attendance</i> | | |
| Chairperson: | | |
| Secretary: | | |
| Treasurer: | | |
| PRO: | | |
| HQ Staff Member | | |
| | | |
| Clubs Officials present were/are | | |
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The Total Attendance was _____ people altogether including any guests and HQ Staff.

Apologies

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2. Adoption of Agenda

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|------------------------|---------------|
| As circulated: | Yes/No |
| Any amendments: | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Proposed: | |
| Seconded: | |

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

| | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| As circulated: | Yes/No |
| Any amendments: | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Proposed: | |
| Seconded: | |

4. Matters Arising

5. Correspondence

6. Other Agenda Specified Business

7. Reports (in order)

Treasurers Report, Pro Report, Programming Committee, Development Committee, Executive Committee and any Club Reports

Treasurer's Report

P.R.O. Report

Programming Committee Report

Development Committee Report

Executive Committee Report

Club Reports

8. Headquarter's Business

9. A.O.B.

10. Close of Meeting

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| The meeting closed at | | |
| Next meeting will be held in: | | |
| Date: | | |
| Time | | |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Chairman's Signature: | | |
| Date: | | |

Questions For Self Appraisal

1. Do I work effectively to maintain an efficient team?
2. Have I an accurate directory of contact names, addresses and phone numbers for my region?
3. Am I punctual?
4. Do I consult with the Chairman before drawing up and circulating meeting agenda's?
5. Do I return phone calls promptly?
6. Is everybody getting sufficient notice of upcoming events and meetings?
7. Is all outgoing correspondence neatly written and easily understood?
8. Do I have a proper filing system i.e. Can I find anything I need quickly?
9. Am I aware of and understand my responsibilities in accordance with the Associations Policies and guidelines, implement them and be in a position to inform others.
10. Do I attend all necessary meetings?
11. Do I pay attention to all incoming correspondence and ensure it is dealt with properly and expediently?
12. Do I summarise correspondence before the meeting?
13. Are my minutes concise and to the point?
14. Do I keep copies of all outgoing correspondence?
15. Do I remember to show appreciation to fellow officers and Macra members and to sent thank you notes to guest speakers?
16. Do I maintain a good contact with County and club officers but also, my training and Development Officer?
17. Do I delegate and involve the assistant Secretary sufficiently?
18. Am I positive about the Organisation?
19. Do I enjoy the job of County/regional Secretary?
20. Am I becoming burnt out?
21. Have I identified someone to take over from me?