

# New plain language constitution for community groups

This plain language constitution has been produced by the Welsh Office of the Charity Commission in partnership with WCVA and Welsh CVC's, and is designed to meet the needs of small groups who are looking to formally establish themselves with the minimum of fuss. It is based on the participants' combined experience of community development and charity law, together with many years of working with governing documents and community groups.

The project group felt there was a real need for a short, clear constitution that everybody can understand and that will encourage people from all walks of life to be 'on the committee'. The constitution is only 600 words long and covers all the requirements needed for a well run group. It has been designed primarily for groups with an income of less than £5000 a year (below the charity registration threshold), which don't need to be incorporated.

It's hoped that this model constitution will help new groups and those seeking to advise them, it is available to be freely distributed (subject to the terms below) and a short questionnaire is planned for circulation in July 2008 seeking feedback from users. If you need any further information, please contact Harry Iles of the Charity Commission, Enrico Carpanini of WCVA, or your local CVC.

December 2007

#### Terms of use

Every care has been taken in the development of this document, but it cannot be relied on as formal legal advice and the Charity Commission, WCVA or those others involved in its development are unable to warrant its fitness for purpose. Where legal advice is needed prior to its use, this should be sought from an independent lawyer or other suitable professional/expert.

# CONSTITUTION

## **A**     **NAME**

The group's name is \_\_\_\_\_

## **B**     **THE PURPOSES OF THE GROUP ARE :-**

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## **C**     **CARRYING OUT THE PURPOSES**

In order to carry out the purposes, the Committee has the power to : -

- (1)     raise funds, receive grants and donations
- (2)     buy or sell property, take on leases and employ staff
- (3)     co-operate with and support other groups with similar purposes
- (4)     do anything else within the law which is necessary to achieve the purposes

## **D**     **MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee may admit to membership anybody aged 18 and over who supports the purposes of the group. People who wish to become a member should apply to the Committee. Membership lasts for \_\_\_ years and may be renewed. The Committee will keep an up to date membership list.

The Committee may expel someone from membership, provided it is in the best interest of the group to do so, and they are given the right to be heard by the Committee before the decision is made. They can be accompanied by a friend.

## **E**     **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGM**

- (1)     The AGM must be held every year, with 14 days notice given to all members telling them what is on the agenda.
- (2)     There must be at least \_\_\_ members present at the AGM.
- (3)     The Committee shall present the annual report and accounts.
- (4)     Any member may put themselves forward for election as a Committee member at the AGM.
- (5)     Every member has one vote.
- (6)     Members shall elect between 3 and 10 members to the Committee. They will retire at the next AGM and may stand for re-election.

## **F**     **COMMITTEE**

- (1)     The Committee shall hold at least 3 meetings each year. They will elect a chair, treasurer and secretary at their first meeting.
- (2)     At least 3 Committee members must be at a committee meeting to be able to take decisions. Minutes shall be kept for every meeting.

- (3) The Committee must keep accounts which may be viewed by any member on request.
- (4) During the year, the Committee may appoint up to \_\_ extra members on to the Committee who will stand down at the next AGM but are eligible for re-election.
- (5) The Committee may make reasonable additional rules for the proper conduct and management of the group. These rules must not conflict with this constitution or the law.

**G MONEY**

- (1) Funds must be held in the group’s bank account. All cheques must be signed by 2 Committee members.
- (2) Funds cannot be used to pay Committee members except to refund legitimate expenses.
- (3) Funds and property must only be used for the purposes of the group.

**H SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS**

Special General Meetings may be called by the Committee for the following reasons. All members must be given 14 days notice and told what change is proposed.

- (1) **Changing the Constitution** - The constitution may be changed by a two thirds majority of members present and voting at a Special General Meeting.
- (2) **Emergency Special General Meetings** – to allow the members to decide on important issues.
- (3) **Winding up** – the group may be wound up by a two thirds majority of members present and voting at a Special General Meeting. Any money or property remaining after payment of debts must be given to a group with similar (charitable) purposes.

**J SETTING UP THE GROUP**

This constitution was adopted on \_\_\_\_\_ 200\_\_ by the people whose signatures appear below. They will be the Committee until the first AGM, which must be held within one year of this date.

**Signed**

**Print name and address**

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