

GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

Governance is the system by which an organisation is directed and managed. A club with good governance will have an honest and transparent culture supported by a good structure, that adheres to the policies and procedures of the club. This allows the club to progress in the direction set out by the members and ensures that no individual or group within the club is in a position to operate without oversight or review.

The administration of a club refers to the day to day activities carried out by the volunteers and staff of a club. While good governance must provide transparency, oversight and review; good administration needs to be effective and efficient.

Section 2.1 will focus on the key elements that enable a club to have a suitable structure that lends itself to good governance practices.

Constitution

The constitution is the primary governing document for a club. It outlines the purpose of a club, how a club is structured and managed and the rules that govern the club. This document is important when making decisions, solving disputes, dealing with disciplinary issues, electing committee members, managing the dissolution of the club and highlighting to external bodies why the club exists and how it conducts its affairs.

A club without a constitution is in danger of being led by people who have no foundation on which to base their decisions. This leads to inconsistency and a lack of direction. It also denies members a say in the rules that govern a club and an opportunity to change and create new rules.

When working with external bodies, particularly funders, a constitution is normally a requirement as it highlights the legitimacy, purpose, structure and operations of the club.

The constitution should be adopted at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) and should be capable of amendment by an AGM or Special General Meeting (SGM).

A constitution will not cover all contingencies, and decisions in cases of dispute may lie with the committee or an AGM/SGM. It is advisable to have a constitution covering the activities of the club. It should include clear provisions showing the matters determined by the committee, items that require voting, and the requirements to make a valid decision.

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Consult a professional to ensure that the club's specific areas of activity are accounted for in the constitution. Professional advice is essential should your club be in any of the following situations:

- Employing staff
- Applying for an alcohol licence
- Raising Finance
- Purchasing property
- Any other scenarios that raise doubts about the relevance of the constitution

Please see Section 7, Appendix A for a sample constitution

Annual General Meeting

The AGM is the most important meeting of the year and enables the members to play their role in the governance of the club. It should be held each year at such time and place as determined by the committee, at approximately twelve monthly intervals, but no more than fifteen months after the date of the previous AGM.

The AGM usually provides the mechanism for electing the members of the committee, considering a report on the previous year's activities, reviewing the accounts, voting on motions put forward by the membership or the committee and considering other matters of importance. The constitution states when the AGM is held each year and the protocols for holding an AGM.



AGM - LIST OF ITEMS

- Receive and approve the minutes of the previous AGM
- Receive reports from the Chairperson, Secretary
- Presentation of the club's annual financial accounts.
- Election of officers / committee members
- Appoint someone to certify the club's accounts
- Fix the subscription for the year
- Consider motions
- Any Other Business

The AGM provides an opportunity for the membership to review the club's performance annually and make changes where necessary.

The club constitution highlights how the AGM is conducted. It will identify the quorum, how committee members are elected and member's voting rights. It also outlines how and when the Secretary should notify members, how motions are put forward and the primary agenda items.

Not all clubs will elect their officers (Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer) at an AGM. Some clubs prefer to elect their committee. It is then up to the committee to elect the best suited candidates for Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Whatever the method it should be clearly defined in the club constitution.

Club Ethos Statement

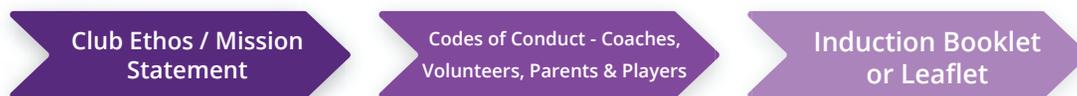
Each football club sets out to write their history and while there are shared characteristics amongst all clubs, each club is unique.

Effective clubs are those that are transparent, proactive, organised, communicate regularly, have just and structured policies and procedures in place and value their members.

A club should strive to instill its unique ethos in all of its members. The ethos may include an expectation on how club members conduct themselves and the values that the club promote. Clubs can present their specific values via a club ethos statement that has a positive and welcoming message.

Clubs have a responsibility to provide for and develop all their members equally. It may mean a shift from focusing on results to prioritising player development. For young players, the aim should be to provide a platform for them to learn about the game and grow their skills without the pressures of over-competitiveness.

The club should incorporate equality as a core value, welcoming players of all ages, abilities and backgrounds and encouraging everyone to get involved. Football should be safe, fun and conducted in a spirit of fair play. Clubs can take this on board and use it as a basis for creating a positive environment that will attract coaches, volunteers, players, and sponsors. Every member of the club should be aware of the club ethos statement. The items that a club may address to successfully promote its ethos include:

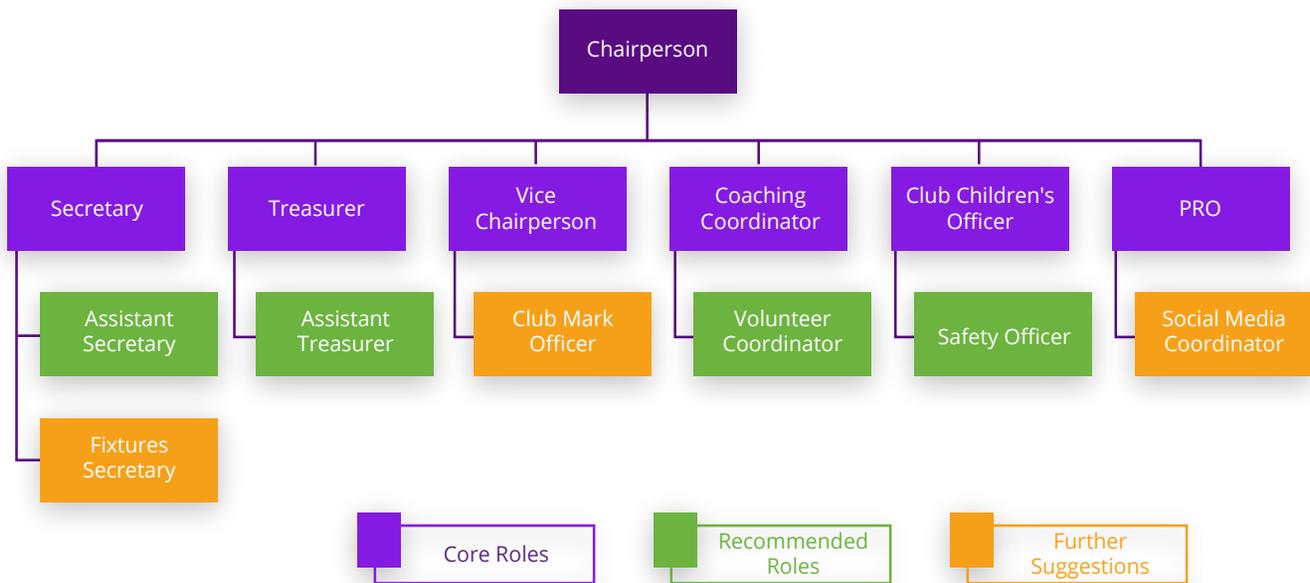


Please see Section 7, Appendix B for a sample club ethos statement

Club Committee

Clubs require a committee to govern and manage the club. The club committee can also be known as the 'Executive Committee' or 'Management Committee'. It enables the club to operate in an efficient manner and has governance and management responsibilities. The committee is empowered by the members to make decisions and complete actions.

It can be difficult for clubs to attract people onto the committee and as a result, clubs may need to start with a small committee which can fill the core positions. From there the club may decide to add various other roles dependent on its size and requirements. People with particular skills should be assigned as far as it is possible to appropriate roles, e.g. an accountant or bookkeeper may make a good treasurer. Identified in the table are 'core' positions that a club should strive to fill, as well as some other recommended positions.



The committee is responsible for:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the financial matters of the club. Managing the legal matters of the club. Managing relationships with key stakeholders. Setting the aims and objectives of the club. Communicating with the members. Conducting long-term planning of activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseeing the running of all club business on a day to day basis. Organising the running of and recording the meetings of the club. Organising and running the club's AGM. Providing role descriptions to volunteers. Developing and ensuring the implementation of policies and procedures. Representing the club locally, regionally and nationally.

Role and Responsibilities of Committee Members

Below is a list of key positions for every club and an overview of their functions. Often termed the *'Officers'* of the club, the Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer are the roles with the most responsibility. Other suggestions for further roles are listed below.

Chairperson

- Presides at all meetings of the committee and the AGM.
- Has the power on behalf of the club to perform all acts and execute all documents (policies and procedures).
- Ensures that the decisions of the committee are implemented.
- Performs such other duties assigned to the role from time to time by the committee.
- Reports to the full committee at each of its meetings on all matters of significance requiring committee consideration and advice.
- Is the primary representative of the club within the policies and strategies adopted by the committee or the AGM.
- The Chairperson is also the Designated Liaison Person in accordance with the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

Please see Section 7, Appendix C for a sample role description.



Secretary

- The club's primary administrator.
- Requires a good working relationship with the Chairperson.
- Responsible for scheduling meetings, assisting with the preparation of agendas, recording committee decisions, pursuing follow-up actions and reporting on matters arising.
- Develops a committee member induction programme.
- Facilitates good information flow between committee members and fosters effective working relationships between them.
- Establishes and manages the implementation of an effective system of record-keeping.
- Manages correspondence flows to and from the club.
- Should be an excellent communicator and very well organised.
- Supports the Chairperson and all other bodies of the football club.

Please see Section 7, Appendix D for a sample role description.

Treasurer

- Responsible for the financial aspect of a club.
- Records all financial transactions and regularly reports the club's financial position to the committee.
- Manages the club's accounts, keeps records, provides reports and assists with fundraising.
- Must not commit the club to any expense that has not had prior approval.

Please see Section 7, Appendix E for a sample role description.

Club Children's Officer

- Act as a resource to members with regard to Children's issues and also ensure that Children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk about their experiences.
- Be familiar with the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding policy, Complaints and Disciplinary procedures, Social Media Policy and any other relevant guidelines.
- To undertake the role of Children's Officer, the individual must have completed the Safeguarding 1 and Safeguarding 2 courses.
- Ensure the club have a completed Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement.

Please see Section 7, Appendix F for a sample role description.

Public Relations Officer

Responsible for the publicity / Promotion of the club.

Please see Section 7, Appendix G for a sample role description.

Coaching Coordinator

Responsible for a player development and coaching strategy through all levels of the club.

Please see Section 7, Appendix H for a sample role description.

Guidelines for Committee Members

- Do not place self-interest above the needs of the club.
- Find more information on issues that you are confused about or that may have legal implications.
- Show care and diligence when acting as a member of the management committee.
- Regularly attend committee meetings to stay involved and informed.
- Always act in ways that show good will and good faith.
- Do not gain financially from your position or any information obtained from being a member.
- Make yourself aware of the club's financial situation.
- At meetings, respect the Chairperson and the agreed meeting protocols.
- Treat the deliberations at meetings as confidential to the meeting itself.
- Support the decisions of the committee or, at a minimum, do not seek to undermine them even if you disagree.

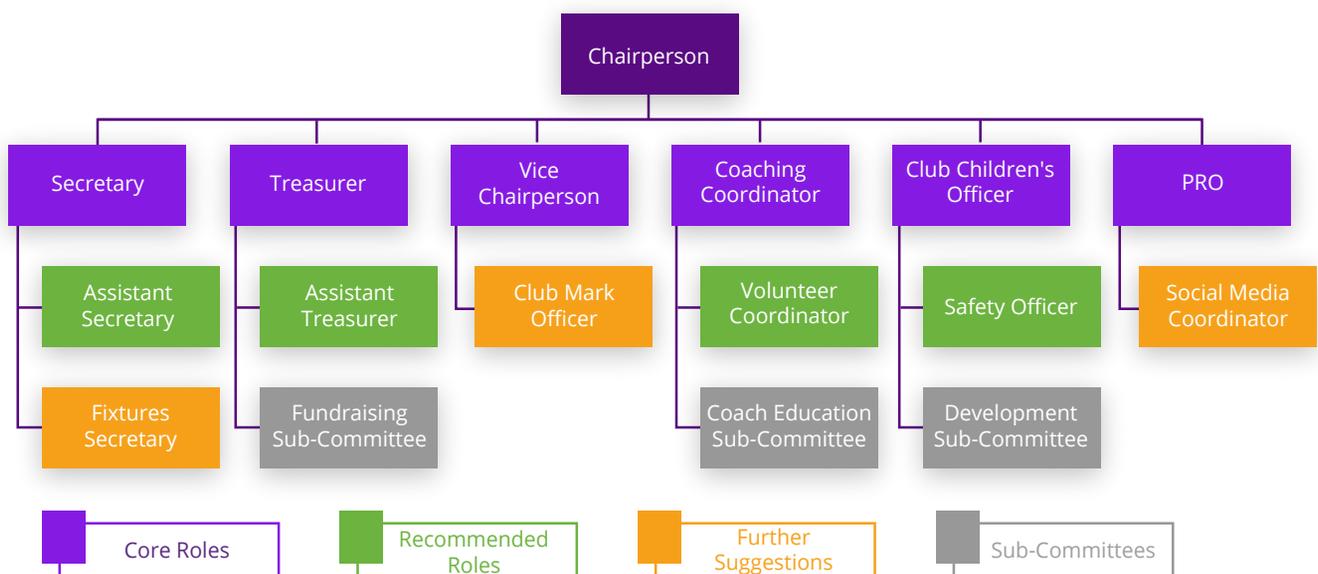
Subcommittees

The committee is responsible for the decisions the club makes. The committee may, however, empower a sub-committee to investigate issues in more depth.

A subcommittee is a small group (3-5 people) assigned to focus on a particular task or area such as fundraising, development, strategic planning, etc. A subcommittee will make recommendations based on their work to the committee for decision (e.g. the fundraising committee may propose a particular fundraising event that needs to be decided on by the committee.)

Subcommittees are an effective method for a club to distribute the workload. They can be utilised to distribute tasks among members and allow people who may have limited time contribute on a smaller scale. The committee should set clear guidelines for subcommittees in how they work, their powers and the reporting process. These guidelines are called terms of reference. It is important that subcommittees do not act beyond their remit. All subcommittees should have a sunset clause by which they will automatically cease to exist after a period unless re-appointed by the club. Ideally, a subcommittee's Chairperson is a member of the committee to maintain a strong link between them.

The table below identifies how to incorporate a subcommittee into the club's organisational chart. Note the logical reporting structures, i.e. a 'Fundraising Sub-Committee' reports to the Treasurer (Finance), 'Coach Education Subcommittee' reports to the Coaching Coordinator (Coaching). The relevant committee member should also serve on the subcommittee e.g. the Treasurer should be the chairperson for the fundraising subcommittee.





Club Planning

Club planning is a commitment to the continued and future development of a club. A club plan brings members together to outline the needs of the club and align those needs with goals. Goals should be SMART- Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time Bound. The club plan should be viewed as a working document and reviewed annually. Items that a club plan cover may include administration processes, fundraising & sponsorship, volunteer development, facilities, communications, coaching & player development.

Creating a Club Plan

Assign a subcommittee to the club plan. The process does not need to be complicated. An initial survey of the members can be completed to gauge the priorities of the club. Complete a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities) analysis to bring more clarity to the key areas of development. Once this initial homework has been completed a club workshop should be organised to discuss the findings in more detail. The steps below outline one possible method to run a club workshop.

Step 1 - Introduce and welcome all members and explain the purpose of the workshop.

Step 2 - Present the findings from the member's survey.

Step 3 - Split members into groups and assign one of the following topics to each group (Or the topics that are relevant to your club)

■ Coaching & Player Development	■ Communication & PR
■ Club Structure & Administration	■ Fundraising and Sponsorship
■ Facilities	■ Volunteer Development

Step 4 - Ask each group to discuss the topics and write down three examples of what the club is doing well and three examples of what the club needs to improve on or start doing.

Step 5 - Ask the groups to present their answers to the room. Collate all the information on flipcharts.

Step 6 - Ask members to pick a topic they are interested in and invite them to another meeting in a smaller group at a later date to discuss it in more depth.

After the initial workshop with members, the subcommittee can organise smaller meetings among interested members to flesh out actions that will make up the basis for the development plan. The subcommittee should then write the document and present to the committee for final approval.

The final plan should:

- Be easy to read.
- Have clear objectives.
- Have clear timelines.
- Assign responsibility to tasks.
- Include an ongoing evaluation process.

Please see Section 7, Appendix I for a sample club development plan.

Legal Status – Options Available to Clubs

Every club has a legal status whether the members are aware of it or not. Each club at the very minimum is an unincorporated association. Therefore, it is important the club's committee is aware of the different types of legal status, what legal status their club has, and what responsibilities come with that status.

There are some different options available to clubs when setting up, or at different times during their development where they have to consider their legal status. This is a brief overview of the most commonly used structures. The club's legal status may depend on their level of responsibility.

A club with little or no assets may benefit from being an unincorporated association covered by insurance. A club which owns land, buildings and employs staff may decide to register as a company. It is recommended that a club takes professional advice before making a decision on which legal status to adopt. Below are two of the common options. More options are available.

1. Unincorporated Association

An Unincorporated Association is the most common structure for clubs as it is the easiest and most informal way to establish an organisation. A group of individuals come together to form a club, governed by a constitution to provide direction and regulate the relationship between its members, and provides for a committee to run its affairs. Put simply, any club which is not a company is an unincorporated association.

It is suitable for clubs that do not hold assets or employ staff, and when combined with adequate insurance policies covers liabilities. It should be remembered, however, that while an unincorporated association does not fall under Company or Co-operative Society law, it is still subject to Common Law and members and others can take actions against it within that legal framework.

Benefits include that an unincorporated club is easy to establish with an agreement of members and a constitution. There is no requirement to file any documents and administrative costs are kept low. The club can also keep their rules and accounts private. Disadvantages include that Trustees will be required if the club is to hold property and if the club enters a contract members of the club must act on its behalf because the club has no legal identity itself.

2. Company Limited by Guarantee not having a share capital

Larger clubs that hold assets such as property including pitches or clubhouses may look at this type of structure as it protects its members from legal and financial liability by holding assets in its name. Any profits generated (if any) are not distributed to its members but reinvested in the company/club.

A company limited by guarantee is set up under the 2014 Companies Act, and its founding document is a Constitution which incorporates a Memorandum and Articles of Association. The company is managed by a Board of Directors and is bound by the requirements of company law. It has responsibilities for making annual returns to the Companies Registration Office and must produce annual accounts even if the club has an exemption from having these audited.

Advantages include the exposure of members limited to the guarantee amount. Normally a nominal fee of €1. The club is a legal entity and can, therefore, hold property. Disadvantages include a regulated environment in which clubs will have to adhere to the Companies Act 2014. Directors will also have specific statutory duties and may be liable if the company fails to comply with the Companies Act.

There are other types of companies that a club may form. When establishing a club and or considering changing the club's legal status, the FAI strongly recommend that the club consults professional services.



ADMINISTRATION

Introduction to Club Administration

The administration processes involved in a football club vary. A club requires the right structures in place to enable the effective and efficient completion of all their administration responsibilities. This section will provide insight on some key administration areas that are relevant to a club.

Club Committee Meeting

The club committee meetings are key to the effective running of the football club. It is important that meetings are run efficiently, allow good decision making and avoid time wasting. This section will highlight methods and tips of running a productive meeting.

Ground Rules

Clear guidelines on how to conduct meetings will result in a more constructive outcome. Compiling a list of ground rules is important to this process. Ground rules can be quite comprehensive; however, it is easy to compile a basic list of principles to guide the meeting. Ground rules assist in maintaining order and creating a positive environment. They also help the Chairperson effectively chair the meeting.

Examples of simple ground rules:

- The opinions of all committee members will be respected.
- Personal attacks on committee members are not acceptable at any time.
- As much as possible, discussions should stay within the allocated time.
- Items not on the agenda can be raised under AOB (Any other business). However, AOB should not be used to raise major matters requiring consideration or decision. All major items should be on the agenda.

The Agenda

The agenda is important as it provides an overall structure for a meeting. A suggested approach is as follows:

1. The Secretary and the Chairperson should prepare the Agenda.
2. Any member of the committee can propose an agenda item to the Chairperson or Secretary. Any such proposal should be received at least five days before the date of the meeting.
3. If the item proposed for the agenda is unsuitable the member should be informed as to why it is unsuitable, and where and when the item can be addressed.
4. Any significant issue not on the agenda should not be dealt with at the meeting.
5. In the case of a dispute the Chairperson will have the final decision.
6. The agenda will be circulated four days before the meeting.
7. The agenda will identify items for decision, discussion and information. Items for decision will be dealt with first, followed by items for discussion.
8. Items for information are presented in writing and by means of a short verbal summary.
9. If an item for decision or discussion has a related document, circulate it with the agenda.

Please see Section 7, Appendix J for a sample agenda.

Common Challenges

The Chairperson plays a critical role in managing meetings. It is important, therefore, that when the Chairperson is being chosen that their skills in this area are considered. There are common challenges when running meetings. The Chairperson should be aware of these to minimise the negative effects.

Committee Meeting Challenges	
Meetings are too long	Ensure people know when the meeting will start and end. The Chairperson must keep to this time unless it is agreed by the meeting that a short additional period is necessary to complete the order of business.
Someone is talking too much	Others will often become bored, irritated or disinterested. They may feel that their presence is not needed, as they do not have an opportunity to input their ideas. Take opportunities to acknowledge what the person has said and then ask others for their opinions.
Some people don't speak at all	If people feel comfortable, they are more likely to express their ideas and opinions. The Chairperson can ask non-threatening, direct questions to those who are less keen to speak.
When members argue	It is important that the Chairperson has a sound knowledge of the issues around conflict and how to manage it. Conflict is not always negative and if managed correctly can be a positive force in sound decision making. There are some areas that are more difficult than others and must be handled quickly and competently. Personal attacks or disrespect for a particular person or their ideas is not acceptable. It is not the role of the Chairperson to take sides but to remain neutral and manage the discussion. Always revert to the established ground rules.
When members argue	Some people can start side discussions at a meeting. This can be distracting and irritating for other members. Make all contributions through the Chairperson, and he or she should be the one to call on people to speak.
The meeting ends without clarity as to what has been decided	If the agenda is structured as suggested above this is less likely to happen. However, it is good practice for the Chairperson to sum up what has been decided at the end of the meeting.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when someone close to a committee member (e.g. family, partner and friends) has an interest in, or potential to benefit from a decision which will be taken by the committee. If there is a possibility of a conflict of interest, the individual should bring it to the attention of the committee. If a member believes that a conflict of interest will or is likely to emerge, then it is their responsibility to withdraw from any business or discussion regarding that issue. It is always best to err on the side of caution.

There are several steps to take if this situation arises.

- Acknowledge the conflict at the beginning of the discussion with as much or as little detail as is relevant.
- Ask that the acknowledgement of the conflict of interest and the withdrawal from participation in the discussion be recorded in the minutes.
- Leave the room or area in which the discussion is being held, asking to be informed when the time is right to return.
- On returning to the discussion, the individual may be informed of the decision, and that should be noted in the minutes.



Minutes

Minutes of a meeting are recorded notes of what happened at the meeting. The Secretary is responsible for taking and typing up minutes of each meeting with appropriate wording (agreed, noted, approved, recommended, received, etc.). There are different types of minutes –

1. Those that record only those present, the decisions taken and who voted on which issues and how.
2. Those that record the key elements of discussions as well as the matters outlined at 1.
3. Narrative minutes which record in detail what was said at the meeting as well as the decisions.

Approach no. 1 or no. 2 is recommended. Approach no. 3 is time-consuming and can give rise to a lot of subsequent disagreement about exactly what was said and by whom.

Minutes

- List the people present and record the apologies for absences.
- Follow the order of the agenda.
- State the main decisions made.
- Complete the minutes and circulate to members as soon as possible after the meeting.
- When taking minutes at the AGM, keep a formal record with the names of proposers and seconders, quoting any resolutions and the results of any voting.

Decision Making

The work of the committee involves making decisions. Each committee may have a different way of making those decisions and voting on whether to accept or reject proposals. In many cases, the committee will seek to achieve consensus. But if a meeting arrives at a point where a decision or resolution needs to be made, each member will be asked to cast a vote. Casting one's vote can be done in various ways, but a show of hands, or written ballot are the most common. The scope of a committee's decision making should be highlighted in the club's constitution. In most constitutions, the Chairperson will have a second or casting vote in the event of a tie.

Registration and Affiliation

After making contact with and being accepted by the league(s) that the club plans to affiliate to, the club will need to assign a volunteer to act as a contact to the league.

The club may need to convince the league(s) that they will have enough players available to form teams, and volunteers to administer the club.

The league to which the application is being made may require details on the club's membership, finances and the previous AGM accounts. The club should be in a position to provide the relevant documentation. This is to ensure that the club is capable of fulfilling their fixtures. The league contact will need to understand the league(s) rules as they may differ for each league. He/she should be familiar with registration procedures for players and of any associated cost/duties that are required by the League.

Communication with League, Affiliate & the FAI

Every League holds regular meetings which a club's league contact is obliged to attend. He/she will also update the club's committee and team managers with relevant information. The club's league contact should be the primary contact for all league business. They should also attend league and affiliate AGM's as required.

Insurance

To safeguard your members, your club must be properly insured. The insurance cover that your club will need will depend on your club's size, the activities that members take part in and the club's assets. Insurance is required to cover a range of scenarios from the loss of equipment through to serious personal injury, fire damage or a break in. Therefore, whatever the size or type of club, seek professional advice from an insurance company or broker. The main elements of an insurance policy should include the following:

Public Liability Insurance

Public Liability indemnifies the club against claims by members of the public visiting the club's grounds, club house and or other properties of the club against accidental loss or injury. Public Liability Insurance for football clubs protects a club on their legal liability to third parties for injury/damage etc. Public Liability is a vital cover for every club as no-one can ever predict accidents, and operating without this safety net puts the club and individuals at risk. Clubs need to explore the details of their public liability insurance with their insurance broker.

Personal Accident Insurance

Personal accident insurance provides cover for accidental injury to members that may arise due to playing and training. The policies are often very specific, such as payment for hospital expenses and weekly payments over the period of disablement or injury. Many clubs offer group insurance to provide personal accident cover for members.

Employer's Liability Insurance

Employer's liability covers incidents pertaining to employees. The policy covers legal liability to employees for injury or disease sustained during their employment.

Insurance Key Points

- Clubs require insurance to protect assets and to deal with any liabilities which may arise.
- Taking appropriate professional advice on insurance is essential.
- Clubs should ensure they have appropriate health and safety procedures.
- Plan frequent reviews of the terms and extent of insurance cover.
- Put in place support and training for those in key positions in the club, whether they are a coach, manager, child protection officer, etc.
- Consider where there is a duty of care owed and where the main areas of vulnerability exist.
- Ensure that proper records are kept when an incident occurs and statements are taken at the time.
- Never condone bad working practice.

Please see Section 7, Appendix K for a sample Accident/ Incident report form.

Financial Management

For the benefit of the club, the treasurer, the committee, all the club's members and external stakeholders it is essential that the club's finances are managed properly and transparently. Good financial management is necessary for the health and sustainability of the club. To do this, the club requires a budget and financial procedures.

- Every club should have a bank account opened in the club's name.
- The designated account signatories are the three officers; Chairperson, Secretary and the Treasurer. No sum should be drawn from the club account except by cheque signed by two of the three designated signatories.



- All monies payable to the club should be received by the Treasurer and deposited in the club account.
- The committee should have the power to authorise the payment of remuneration and expenses to any member of the club and any other person or persons for services rendered to the club.
- Some banks have specific packages aimed at not for profit clubs with operating benefits that may assist the club. The committee should discuss its needs with their bank.

Budgeting

The committee should draw up an operational budget projection for the year. When working on the budget, the club should project revenue cautiously. Expenses should also be realistic with an added input of 5-10% contingency in case expenses increase during the year. Examples of items in the budget are:

Expenses	Revenue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pitch Lease ■ Affiliation Fees ■ Insurance ■ Salary ■ Administration Expenses ■ Training Equipment ■ Team Equipment and Travel ■ Facilities Development ■ Excess on Insurance Claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Membership Subscriptions ■ Raffles ■ FAI National Draw ■ Lotto ■ Fundraising/Sponsorship ■ FAI Summer Soccer Schools ■ FAI Soccer Sisters

Please see Section 7, Appendix L for a sample budget planner.

The annual budget will enable the club committee and members to make better decisions concerning the club finances in the coming year. For example, the club may decide that they need to reduce expenses and increase fundraising. The Treasurer should keep account of all transactions and report to the committee on an ongoing basis.

Please see Section 7, Appendix M for a sample income and expenditure account form.

Responsibility

The Treasurer is responsible for day to day financial tasks which should be recorded. It is the job of the committee to ensure that the financial state of the club remains healthy. At each committee meeting the Treasurer should present:

- Income
- Expenditure
- Bank balance
- List of monies owed
- List of moneys due
- Financial commitments

For the AGM, the Treasurer will need to prepare:

- Annual financial statement and balance sheet.
- Treasurer's report to be put before the AGM.
- Financial statements to be forwarded to club members before the AGM.
- Financial statement to be approved by the committee before the AGM and signed by any two of the three officers of the club.

Discipline

Disciplinary processes can be positive and encourage members to take responsibility for their actions when representing the club. The club is required to have a disciplinary process that adheres to the Rules of the FAI. Members should be made aware of club rules and policies.

Before the disciplinary process starts clubs should try to mediate informally first particularly in disputes between members. If a situation can be resolved informally, it will save time and energy. The further the process goes the more difficult it becomes to find an amicable resolution.

Clubs may entrust disciplinary matters and investigations to a disciplinary subcommittee. If no subcommittee exists, the responsibility lies with the committee to initiate and progress disciplinary proceedings. A disciplinary subcommittee is a three-person committee normally involving an officer of the committee, the Child Welfare Officer, and another member of the club that may have experience in this area. The subcommittee requires clear terms of reference to carry out disciplinary matters. Complaints to the subcommittee should be in writing and require a response in writing within a certain time frame (e.g. five working days).

If a complaint involves suspected abuse or criminal offence, then the internal investigation should be stopped, and details passed on to the statutory authorities as soon as possible.

The Disciplinary Committee

1. The disciplinary committee is authorised to recommend sanctions for any breach of the rules. The committee should have the final decision.
2. The disciplinary committee shall be a three-person subcommittee with at least one officer.
3. Members of the disciplinary committee shall decline to participate in any hearing concerning a matter where there are grounds for questioning their impartiality.
4. The members of the disciplinary committee shall ensure that disclosures made to them remain confidential to the disciplinary body unless they are of a criminal nature in which case they must inform the statutory authorities.
5. The members of the disciplinary committee of the club may not be held personally liable for any deeds or omissions relating to any disciplinary procedure.
6. The disciplinary committee shall notify any member or official of any disciplinary charge being brought against them. The disciplinary committee shall set a date for a hearing giving at least seven days' notice unless a shorter period is necessary due to the nature of the offence. Any person charged shall be entitled to attend and present or be represented at a hearing if they so wish.
7. The disciplinary committee shall determine the procedures for the hearing and nominate one of their members to act as Chairperson. The disciplinary committee may adjourn a hearing and reconvene if necessary.
8. The disciplinary committee shall ensure a copy of its decision is sent to all parties to the procedure within 7 days.
9. Decisions are best communicated by registered post.
10. Anyone dissatisfied with the decision may have grounds for an appeal depending on the rules of the club and or the league.

SANCTIONS

A disciplinary committee may recommend the following sanctions

- An instruction
- A reprimand
- A fine
- A warning
- A suspension from membership
- An expulsion ban from the club and club activities



Disciplinary Steps	
Step 1	Complaints and/or concerns brought to club secretary in writing
Step 2	Convene Disciplinary Committee
Step 3	Disciplinary Committee inform all parties and afford opportunity to reply and ensure access to fair process
Step 4	Disciplinary Committee hears the facts and evidence of case of and decide if a rule or regulation has been infringed
Step 5	Disciplinary Committee inform all parties in writing of sanctions according to the rules
Step 6	Any party unhappy with the findings may be able to appeal to the club and or their respective superior body
Step 7	The appeal body should uphold or reject or vary, alter or set aside any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee

For more information on disciplinary processes please revert to the Rules of the FAI.
www.fai.ie/domestic/governance/fai-rule-book

Club Supports

To assist with all the different elements of running a club the volunteers involved can draw on supports that exist in the community for voluntary sports clubs. These supports may assist with grants, advice, coaching courses, facilities, league affiliations etc. The primary sources of assistance are listed below.

FAI Development Officers	In all areas of Ireland, their role is to assist with the development of football clubs.
Local Sports Partnerships	Have a wealth of experience drawn from all areas of sport to assist your growth at different stages of development.
Local League	The local league is an excellent resource for football clubs that need additional supports and/or information.
Local County or Civic Council	If you're looking for a pitch to hire for training or home games, your club may be able to get access to a council owned ground.

NOTE: The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will be effective from 25th May 2018. This will replace the existing data protection framework under the EU Data Protection Directive. The FAI will issue guidance to clubs on their compliance with the Regulation by making informative resources available on GDPR at www.fai.ie. For more information and resources on GDPR please email datamanager@fai.ie.

COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Communication is essential to run a club and requires planning. It involves good verbal and writing skills, an ability to be creative and a working knowledge of communications technology.

Communications is not only about the media. It covers internal communications such as that between the committee and the members as well as communications with those outside the club such as parents, supporters, leagues, other clubs and sponsors.

Poor communication can lead to missed meetings, poor external relationships, missed games, missed training sessions and a bad image for the club. Good internal and external communications can keep everyone involved and informed, highlight the positives of the club, attract sponsors and ensure the club is valued by the community.

Communication for a football club can be split into internal communication and external communication.

Internal Communication

Internal communication refers to day to day operations and ensuring that the right message is getting to the right people. Members need to be made aware of all upcoming club activities to ensure their continued involvement. People ultimately need to know what, when and where activities are happening.

The people involved in internal communications include:

- The Committee
- Public Relations Officer
- Subcommittees
- Managers/Coaches
- Parents
- Members
- League Secretary

Every member of the club plays a role in communication however certain people within the club have the responsibility of informing members of certain activities. The secretary is responsible for informing and providing information for club meetings. Team managers and coaches disseminate information relating to training and matches, and the League Secretary will bring back relevant information from the League(s).

Tips for good internal communications

- Everyone is connected
- People know their roles and responsibilities
- Everyone is up to date with the club's plan
- Club functions take place and are supported by members
- Club activities run smoothly from day to day



External Communication

External communication is the correspondence with people and organisations external to members of the club. It includes the league(s), the affiliate(s), the FAI, the local community, school, parents, sponsors, etc. Good external communication highlights a vibrant image of the club, gives a positive impression to parents, attracts sponsors and encourages people to get involved as volunteers. Methods of external communication include:

Newspapers

A club can benefit from building a relationship with a newspaper. To achieve this, the PRO should request a meeting with the paper, find out if they have a football section, offer to send them articles and pictures, offer to send them information about any community events/fundraising event the club are involved in and inform them of any upcoming games. Getting articles in a newspaper will help build awareness for the club, enhance the club's reputation and add value and attract sponsors.

Club Website

A club website is a valuable cost effective tool to promote the club and inform people of club activities'. The website should present a professional image, should be regularly updated and promoted amongst the members and the wider community. A good website will result in:

- Increased interest
- Members and the community being kept informed
- Promotion of sales for the club shop/lotto
- Added value for sponsors
- Widespread promotion of the club

Social Media

Social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube provide a unique opportunity to promote the club. Social Media also creates an opportunity to engage with members, supporters, parents and the wider football community in a two-way conversation.

The different platforms offer:

- A very large reach.
- An opportunity to grab people's attention.
- An opportunity to create and share content.
- Excellent feedback through analytics and statistics.
- An economic method of promotion.

Access to social media sites that represent the club should be limited to designated people, and the club should ensure that no inappropriate content is posted or that club members do not breach the FAI's Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy on communication.

Please see Section 7, Appendix N for a sample social media policy.