

Annual General Meetings



Rural Community Network
SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES

What Is An AGM?

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a general meeting open to all members of a community group/organisation and it is held once a year. In broad terms, the purpose of the AGM is to present and review the work of the group over the past year and to plan the direction of work for the coming year. This also includes presenting and agreeing the accounts for the past year and electing a new committee for the coming year.

The procedures for holding an AGM must be set out in the group's Constitution or Articles and Memorandum of Association. It is important to ensure that these constitutional rules are adhered to. The AGM is also the best time and place to consider any changes or amendments to the Constitution.

A Constitution is a set of rules that details the broad aims and objectives of the group and governs the way it conducts its business. If a community group/organisation becomes a Company, the set of legal rules are called Articles and Memorandum of Association.

The AGM is one of the best ways to involve the wider community in the work of the group and for the group to keep in touch with the communities' needs and views. It is important to ensure that the AGM is well planned and is as open and accessible to the community as possible.

Celebrate Achievements

An AGM is a great way to celebrate all that a community group/organisation has achieved over the last year and a good way to involve the community in sharing the celebration. AGMs should be positive events that people are happy to participate in – so think creatively about how to organise it.

Preparing an Annual Report

An Annual Report really should highlight all the achievements the community

group/organisation has attained over the last year. It is a good idea to involve all of the members of the Group in this activity as it helps to create a sense of ownership and pride in the achievements.

Group Activity

1. Brainstorm all the events and activities which the group has been involved in over the past year and record on flip chart paper.
2. Arrange the activities into broad headings such as 'ongoing activities', 'group development', 'new projects' etc. These may form sections in the Report.
3. Delegate the responsibility of writing up each section of the Annual Report among the group members. Agree a timescale for completing each section.
4. Now it is time to put all of the information together into a report format. Keep it simple and remember to use photographs and other visual images.

Designing an Annual Report

- Include reports from the Chair, Treasurer, staff and any sub committees as required
- Include a copy of the accounts
- Use photographs, graphics and colour – try to use photographs that show people doing something active
- Make sure articles are readable, interesting and concise
- Be upbeat and positive
- Use headings or sub titles to break up text
- Make headings interesting
- Keep the language simple
- Use consistent layout and format
- Include contact details for the group
- Include some facts and figures about achievements, eg the number of

members, services provided, training offered etc

- Acknowledge funders within the Annual Report

An Annual Report is a testimony to all the group's hard work during the year. Send copies to other groups and agencies, the District Council and all funders.

Elections

A group's Constitution should detail the procedures for conducting elections. Some groups conduct all aspects of the election on the night but it is less time consuming and often fairer to ask for written nominations in advance and, if necessary, send out voting papers. Remaining vacancies can then be filled at the AGM. Here are some tips for conducting elections.

- Circulate a list of responsibilities that sets out what is required from committee members
- Hold a discussion/question session on roles and responsibilities
- Advertise vacancies widely among all members
- Ensure that the committee is representative of the community in terms of gender, age, religious and geographical balance etc
- Ensure that the individuals are nominated by another member and not by themselves
- Make sure that nominees do not have any conflicts of interest (a situation where they have a personal interest and may stand to benefit from being involved)
- If using postal elections, send out information/biographies on the nominees along with the voting forms
- Election of office bearers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer etc) should be conducted at the first meeting of the new committee

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- Information packs should be provided for all new committee members and introductory training offered
- Remember, the new committee can co-opt representatives from any special interest groups

The election must be transparent, fair and equitable.

Suggested AGM Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Presentation of the Annual Report (Chair)
5. Presentation of the Annual Accounts (Treasurer)
6. Appointment of Auditor (if needed)
7. Election of the new Committee
8. Proposed Motions (if any)
9. Guest Speaker/s
10. Any Other Business
11. Social Event (if planned)

A 'motion' is a proposal for discussion and decision at the AGM. It may call on the group to undertake a particular action, or it could involve a change to the Constitution.

The Social Aspect of AGM

Some examples of how other groups have made their AGMs into social events include a table quiz (in aid of local charity), traditional music and storytelling (youth drama group), a demonstration event (cooking, craft activity etc) or a youth talent competition.

Combining the more formal aspects of the AGM with an informal social event is a great way to encourage people to come along and network.

Points to remember when planning an Annual General Meeting

Date - Does the proposed date conflict with any other events?

Budget - How much is available? Has the cost of speakers been built in? It is important to visit the venue before booking and negotiate costs at this stage with the conference manager. All communication in relation to requirements and costings should be confirmed by email so that a written record is held.

Format - Include an agenda. Will workshops form part of the conference? If so, decide on themes, questions and facilitators. Is there a creative aspect to the event, ie a drama sketch or dance?

Venue - Is the venue shared? Is it central to the target audience? Does it have disability access? Are there adequate car parking facilities? Ensure that the room will hold the required number of people in the preferred style, for example, theatre style or boardroom style. If registration is required, advise the venue staff of number of desks and positioning. Final numbers for food and refreshments should be confirmed with the hotel approximately 24 hours before the event takes place. Any special dietary requirements should be discussed with the hotel prior to the event.

Speakers - Have any been identified? Will the speakers need to be collected and taken to the venue?

Equipment including Audio Visual requirements - What equipment needs to be booked from the venue, for example, is a roving microphone needed?

Administration - prepare name badges, registration sheets and ensure all paperwork is in order. Check the constitution and ensure that the group follows the procedures laid down for holding the AGM.

Promotional Material - Ensure that some of the organisation's promotional material is brought along. If appropriate, invite other groups/agencies to put up displays.

Photography - Does the event warrant a photographer? If not, ensure that some photographs are taken with the organisation's digital camera. If yes, ensure that a brief is given to the photographer with names of officials etc. Think of any photo opportunities - is there a launch, a presentation, a VIP? It is beneficial to 'set up' a few photographs with key attendees from different geographical areas, this assists in media coverage as local newspapers are keen to print people from their readership areas.

Press Release - A press release should be issued at least three weeks before the event as well as a post event press release accompanied by photographs. See the Public Relations fact sheet for further information.

Evaluation - Evaluation should be carried out for each event and an evaluation sheet included in every pack. Areas which should be evaluated include venue, workshops, speakers and administration. All evaluations should be collected and typed into a summary report.