

BHS Committee Meetings

The following guidelines are to assist with running a successful committee meeting, they align with our Terms of Reference. This document has been updated with best practices the Volunteer Manager has observed whilst visiting committees around the UK and endeavours to support a collaborative, supportive approach for our teams where everyone feels appreciated.

Planning and Preparation

Venue and Environment

The choice of meeting site needs to accommodate the number of people who can attend and needs to be conducive to fulfilling the purpose of the meeting. Many of our committees represent a large geographical area, so try to locate a venue that suits the majority of the committee. This could be one central meeting place or it might be more appropriate to move meetings around the area so that travelling pressure is shared between all of the volunteers. You should also make sure that there is enough room for everyone and that the space is quiet and clean. Village halls, pub meeting rooms or training rooms at colleges or Approved Centres are all good options.

Dates and Times

You should hold committee meetings on as many occasions as is necessary for the dispatch of business. It is recommended that this should be at least four times a year but no more than eight times a year. It is a good idea to have a regular meeting date (for example the first Monday of the month) and to book the meeting dates in advance for the year so that you can book venues and make it easier for people to plan to attend. This will also help staff members attend meetings and support you.

The majority of our committees hold evening meetings, so that everyone can attend. You should consider travel time to and from the meeting as well as time for volunteers to care for their horses and family when setting the start and end times for the meetings. Long meetings become less productive as time goes on. People prefer shorter, more constructive meetings, two and a half hours is about average.

Agenda

Every meeting should have an agenda, this doesn't have to be extensive, but should ensure that all matters arising are included and that each volunteer has the opportunity to share their recent activities and ideas for the future or challenges they need support for. A well thought out agenda will involve the whole committee and should aim to keep things moving forward and provoke fresh initiatives. It can be useful to have a standing agenda that is sent out by the Secretary along with matters arising and a request for an additional agenda items or apologies two weeks before the meeting. A final agenda should be agreed between the Secretary and Chairman and circulated to the whole committee and the local National/Regional Manager the week before the meeting.

The Purpose of a Committee Meeting

BHS Committee Meetings are held for a variety of reasons: to make decisions about events, to decide where to spend money that has been raised, to discuss how to raise awareness about upcoming campaigns and to conduct any other relevant business. Welfare, Safety and Access Officers attending the meeting might be able to suggest themes for awareness raising or fundraising events that would benefit local horses or highlight local problems.

Committee Meetings also present an opportunity for team members to support each other, to ensure volunteers aren't overwhelmed by their roles or personal circumstances and to collaborate on ideas for solutions to specific challenges volunteers are facing within their roles. The team might decide to create a sub-committee or project group to look into a problem in more detail and return to the committee with suggestions or a solution. It is normal for work go on outside the committee meeting where necessary to complete tasks.

Who Should Attend and How Often

The committee should aim to encourage all local volunteers to attend a meeting at least once a year. This will help you get to know your local Access, Safety and Welfare Officers and help them feel part of a team. It is expected that most other team members would attend at least three meetings a year, more where possible, to be effective.

Minimum Meeting Requirements

You should always aim to book meetings when the most people can attend and consider cancelling or postponing them until more people can attend where necessary. Where this is not possible a quorum, or the minimum number of people needed to hold a meeting, would be three voting members or 50% of the committee, whichever is greater.

Running the Meeting

Respect

As outlined in the Volunteer Policy, volunteers and employees should treat each other with respect, acting courteously at all times. The Chairman should ensure that everyone is respectful at meetings. There should be one speaker at a time, no side conversations and everyone should be given an opportunity to speak.

If you are unsure about volunteer behaviour at meetings please consult the Volunteer Manager and refer to the Volunteer Policy.

Introductions

Introductions given on both sides are a great way to ensure meetings are as inclusive as possible for visitors, new members and volunteers who don't attend as often.

The Role of the Chairman

The Chairman should be keeping the committee to the agenda, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate. Committee meetings should be an enjoyable event where volunteers

discuss how they will support the charity and help the BHS work towards its charitable objectives locally.

Meetings should be an opportunity for volunteers to support each other and have active discussions sharing ideas. Meetings should be a supportive and friendly environment where everyone feels like an appreciated member of the team.

If you or your Chairman feel that this is not the case at your meetings please discuss this with your National/Regional Manager or the Volunteer Manager.

Timings

Ensure the meetings start and end on time and you keep to the agenda. If an agenda item is taking longer than its allocated time confirm if the committee want to finish the discussions and make a decision, defer to the next meeting or agree that a smaller project group should discuss the detail and report back to the committee.

Decisions and Actions

The purpose of meetings is to review previous activity and agree actions for the future. When agreeing actions, individual tasks should be assigned to specific individuals who are present at the meeting or have previously agreed to take on a responsibility. It should be agreed when the actions will be completed and how the committee will be kept up to date as well as any required budget and/or resources.

Use the Actions Grid from the volunteer resources page (<http://www.bhs.org.uk/volunteer-resources>) to help the team keep track of the actions. The Secretary can use this to record any actions individuals are taking to help with events or other committee business and actions can be checked off at the next meeting. This will also help provide a feeling of achievement.

Voting

If something important cannot be unanimously decided upon by all of the committee, one of the ways to implement a decision is to have a vote. Each member of the committee has one vote, with the Chairman holding the casting vote if required. No observers or staff members can have a vote. No member of the team should feel that they are pressured into voting one way or another and all votes and opinions should be respected.

Review

At the end of the meeting review the decisions and actions that have been made and the responsibilities undertaken by committee members.

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting and the action grid highlighting decisions, points for action and those with responsibility for tasks should be produced and circulated shortly after the meeting, ideally within two weeks. Minutes should be sent out to every committee member, whether or not they attended, and to your National/Regional Manager.

Making Use of Regional Meetings

If the committee wishes to raise anything with another BHS Committee or the BHS Board of Trustees they should ask their Chairman to raise it at the Regional Committee Meeting, the Chairman should then ask the National/Regional Chairman to raise it at the Regional Chairman's Meeting at HQ so that the CEO or Chairman of the Trustees can decide on further action or problems or ideas can be shared with other regions. A note of anything raised this way should be kept in the minutes of both meetings and the action noted on the grid. Such actions can also be supported or raised through the Volunteer Manager.

A scanned copy of the minutes should be kept as a record, by either the Chairman or Secretary for six years and these should be passed on to a new volunteer if they resign or complete their term.

Disagreements and Disputes

It is important to recognise that when everyone is volunteering their time to do something they are passionate about they can have strong opinions. The committee meeting should be a place where these opinions can be discussed in an open and constructive manner. Disagreements are possible but don't have to negatively impact the meeting if handled constructively. A meeting should be a safe, friendly space where disagreement is listened to and discussed, this can create positive change and good ideas.

Where disagreements are not handled constructively or get out of hand please refer to the '*BHS Problems and Disputes Guidance Note*' and the '*BHS Volunteer Policy*'. If a situation gets out of hand please contact your National/Regional Manager or Volunteer Manager to discuss how to proceed. They may decide to come to the next meeting to support the team.