



Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster

County Secretary

Role Guide



Contents

Introduction	4
Responsibilities of the role	5
Duties of the role	7
Role of County Secretary	9
Administration as County Secretary	12
Agenda setting	14
Minutes	18
Correspondence	20
Filling and keeping records	22
County Annual General Meeting	23
Pointers for the County Secretary report	25
Handover	26
Personal qualities of a County Secretary	27
Questions for self-appraisal	28
Appendix	30
Guidelines for appointing a County Safeguarding Champion	37

Introduction

Congratulations on being appointed as County Secretary!

We have produced this booklet to help you in your role as County Secretary of your Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU) County.

As the County Secretary you are a vital member of the leadership team within your county, the Secretary is the backbone of the county committee within the YFCU. As County secretary one of the most important duties is to be able to communicate effectively with members and officials within the County, the wider YFCU team and with external individuals and organisations. Essential skills such as communicating, dealing with correspondence, taking, and reading minutes are only a part of this communication process.

As County Secretary you will need to be organised, committed, have the ability and time to take on multiple tasks at any given time. With effective communication and organisation, 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.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ROLE

Show leadership

Attend county meetings and sub-committee meetings, supporting, and promoting club and county events, attending/ facilitating office bearer training and assist in with any other training requirements.

Be informed

Read the Articles of Association, YFCU Policies & Procedures and implement them and be able to inform others of YFCU procedures and protocols.

Promote Planning

Assist with leading the county planning process for the year ahead and finalising and circulating relevant information to your county clubs and Headquarters.

Promote Teamwork

Consult assistants and delegate tasks to help encourage develop the members. Liaise with and involve other officials and members in county run activities.

Administration

You are responsible for the administrative duties of the county committee, including the preparation, writing and circulating agendas, taking minutes from county meetings, and ensuring minutes are actioned in a timely manner.

Be Objective

Set clear targets for yourself during your role as Secretary. It is best practice to remain impartial and support the overall aims and objectives of the county, rather than be influenced by your own or other peoples' opinions.

Time spent outside meetings

Most of the work by an elected official is completed beyond the county, or sub-committee, meeting. The remainder of your time is spent communicating, encouraging discussion, or gaining feedback from members/ committee members.

Be Positive

Maintaining a positive attitude is essential for committee and team morale. As Secretary, your role is key to ensuring the wider committee remains positive and productive.

Avoid Burn Out

Whilst 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.

Safeguarding Officer

- Liaise with your County Chair/ Secretary to nominate and appoint a County Safeguarding Champion (CSC)
([see guidelines for appointing a CSC in the appendix](#))
- Ensure the appointed CSC completes their role effectively for the County
- Communicate regularly with the CSC to maximize the role

DUTIES OF THE ROLE

Each County should hold regular meetings. These include 3 centrally organised meetings in September, November and March, as well as regular sub-committee meetings. The March meeting is the county AGM, and this is facilitated by members of the Presidential team and a staff member from HQ is also present to give an update and share central correspondence.

- Work alongside the County Chair and other County officials to create and develop an annual plan of events for your county
- Make contact and liaise regularly with YFCU Staff team at Headquarters
- Be in regular communications with office bearers within your county as well as YFCU Presidential team
- Establish suitable workable methods of contacting the county officials & club officials in your county. This may be through online group chats or other appropriate forms of communication
- Support the County Chairperson in their role for the development and best interests of the county
- Regularly review and evaluate the county plan for members and elected officials to ensure it is relevant and effective
- Read the Articles of Association and YFCU Policies and guidelines and implement them and be in a position to inform others

-
- Plan, co-ordinate and attend all county committee & sub-committee meetings
 - Minute committee meetings effectively and accurately
 - Assist with and co-ordinate club office bearer training
 - Encourage & support other club officers regularly
 - Seek out a successor for your secretary role, if you are finishing your term of office, in readiness for county AGM
 - Create and issue a thorough report for the AGM and YFCU annual report
 - Seek out future leaders & potential County Officials and encourage their development to take on a role
 - Conduct a thorough handover with the new county secretary
 - Read and honestly answer self-appraisal questions and refer back to these throughout your elected time.



ROLE OF COUNTY SECRETARY

Before the meeting

- Create or approve an agenda alongside the County Chairperson and circulate to county committee
- Secure a venue to hold the meeting
- If you are planning for a central county meeting, share the agenda with HQ, along with the meeting information such as time, date, and venue. It is best practice to do this in advance (minimum 4 weeks) and ask that committee members are forwarded minutes of the last meeting and are sent a copy of the agenda
- Familiarise yourself with and summarise lengthy correspondence
- Agree who will be the CSC for your County
 - Contact them and ensure you have their permission to share their details
 - Once appointed, contact the CSC ahead of county meetings to receive any updates/ communications to note in the meeting agenda

During meeting

- Arrive in good time with all necessary materials
- Take attendance and apologies

-
- Depending on your county, you may need to read the minutes aloud at the start of the meeting. Otherwise, if these have circulated in advance ensure they are adopted and then obtain the Chairperson's signature on them.
 - Ensure the committee have received and read a copy of the previous meetings' minutes
 - Read and share any correspondence updates
 - Discuss any business arising from the minutes
 - Take accurate minutes of all discussions
 - Ensure all proposals and decisions are recorded
 - Record the names of people assigned responsibilities and/or duties to allow these to be actioned in the minutes
 - Discuss the appointment of the CSC, share their details, a brief description of duties and receive any feedback or objections and actions required
 - Offer the CSC the opportunity to share an update at the meeting (ensuring no personal details/ identifiers are shared unless necessary)

After meeting

- Write up minutes as soon as possible after the meeting and circulate to committee members.
- Answer any relevant correspondence
- Carry out any actions from the meeting which have been delegated to you
- Ensure members carry out appropriate actions which were set during the meeting
- Contact YFCU HQ to confirm appointment of your County Safeguarding Champion

Examples of Agendas and Minutes can be found in the appendix section.



ADMINISTRATION AS COUNTY SECRETARY

As County Secretary you are responsible for ensuring admin is kept up to date and records are organised.

What's involved?

- Responsibility for correspondence from and to HQ, clubs and county committee
- Preparing agenda for upcoming meetings following consultation with the Chair
- Booking venues for meetings
- Recording and keeping minutes of meetings
- Acting promptly on correspondence
- Completing forms accurately and ensuring they are within deadlines
- Inviting guests and hosting them at meetings
- Preparing an annual report for presentation at the county AGM and to be included in the YFCU annual report
- Working closely with the Chair to ensure that events and meetings runs smoothly
- Maintaining an accurate attendance record for each meeting and ensuring personal contact information of committee is kept up to date

What you need to be an effective administrator

- Names and telephone numbers of Club, County and Central officials, as well as YFCU HQ 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
- Working knowledge of what worked well, what did not, which events were successful, which were not
- A detailed knowledge of YFCU structures, at Club, County and Central level
- Knowledge of the strategic plan and objectives of the Organisation and how these can be achieved
- Knowledge of the county's procedures



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 Chair and each point should be discussed during each meeting.

An example of an agenda is shown in the appendix section.

Meeting Procedures

The items on any agenda should be:

1. Open Meeting

It is important for the Chair to welcome those members who are attending and to declare the meeting open, so it is clear 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

You can ask members in attendance if they have received any apologies from others in their club for being unable to attend the meeting. These should be noted in the minutes.

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, after this action the minutes are ratified.

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 Chair and stored for safe keeping, both digitally and 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.

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 to undertake them.

5. Matters arising (from the minutes)

Once the minutes have been approved, the next item should be matters arising. Under matters arising, the Chair, 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 discussion later in the meeting then it should not be discussed under matters arising but deferred until that item comes up for discussion.

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 followed up, then discussions/ actions can easily be forgotten about, or remain unactioned.

6. Correspondence

Correspondence refers to any relevant updates, which could include the likes of information from HQ, event dates, meeting dates or invites to events. Correspondence should be read by the Secretary, who will summarise the information where possible.

7. Main Items on the Agenda (County Business)

This section of the agenda should be decided by the Secretary in consultation with the Chair. 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 county 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.

9. HQ business

At this point in the meeting the staff member(s) in attendance will update the committee on matters across the Association. They 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 general 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 Chair considers a point which has been raised under AOB is an important, but non-urgent, matter that may take some time, they should suggest that the issue be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Notes

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 county. The minutes should focus on the following points:

- A brief record 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 but write in enough detail, so these notes can be expanded to reflect the true discussion.
- Ensure that all decisions taken are recorded, ensuring that proposers and seconders for each decision are noted.
- 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, these should be actioned in the minutes, if relevant make note of when tasks are to be carried out by.

-
- 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 member in your county, 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:

- Be clear and to the point; it's best to be brief but relevant
- An accurate account of what occurred at the meeting
- 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 Chair of the meeting where they are agreed
- Do not be afraid to ask for advice on minute writing from HQ

Refer to example of minutes, minute taker & minute reporter found in the appendix section.

CORRESPONDENCE

As Secretary, it is your job to write any correspondence on behalf of your county. 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 Correspondence:

- All correspondence, which the County Secretary receives, should be filed, and brought to the meeting. Confirm the correspondence requires urgent attention, bring it to the chairman's attention and decide on a course of action.
- All letters should be read in advance and summarised.
- The correspondence should be read aloud by the Secretary and record any decisions taken.
- It is often useful to write a note on the correspondence outlining what decision was taken in relation to it.

Writing Correspondence:

- Letters/emails should be brief, concise and to the point.
- Use County headed notepaper.
- Identify the Committee on whose behalf you are writing.
- Include your contact name and telephone number.

-
- 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.



FILLING 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.

It is good practice to keep a digital record and physical copy. A shared online drive, as well as a folder/ box file are easy examples.

Ensure any records kept are in line with YFCU policy and GDPR, if applicable.

Records which should be kept:

- Lists of names and contact details for members of the club officials and all relevant contacts.
 - Should be in line with GDPR and have a specific and relevant purpose and should not be kept when they are no longer relevant
- County Activities.
- A copy of your county diary.
- Copies of club programmes from the county.
- All correspondence sent and received from/by the county.
- Copies of attendance lists at sub and county training as well as club officials.
- Expenses incurred in carrying out your role as Secretary.

COUNTY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a very important meeting for the County. The County AGM takes place in March, and this is when the office bearers for the incoming year are elected.

Before the AGM

- Read all appropriate documentation.
- Discuss, as a committee, who would be suitable for the office bearer roles and nominate / suggest / contact those who you think (it is always good to do this after efficiency judging)
- Agree the date and venue of the AGM in advance, ensuring that this venue is booked and inform HQ of this date and venue so this can be circulated with the Presidential team.
- Agree the agenda for the AGM, alongside the County Chair and send the agenda to HQ.
- Produce a secretary report, detailing the county's year.
- Ensure that the treasurer has also created a thorough report.
- Consider asking the host club to arrange a light supper for the evening.
- Ensure you have received the appropriate AGM pack from HQ.

-
- Ensure that notepaper, pencils, ballot papers and a copy of the YFCU Memorandum and Articles of Association are available.

During the AGM

Ensure that you take accurate minutes of AGM, noting who proposed and seconded members for each role.

After the AGM

- Ensure all officials have completed the relevant paperwork.
- Ensure that you have sent HQ the county AGM return detailing who has been selected for roles.
- Support the new office bearers especially in their first few weeks in the new role, ensure that you give your assistant a thorough handover.

An example of a County AGM agenda can be found in the appendix.

POINTERS FOR THE COUNTY SECRETARY REPORT

The report should be completed in chronological order, alongside the structure of the club year, 1st September–31st August. The report should contain information such as:

- Activities and events that the county has organised.
- Notable events that the clubs within the county have held.
- Successes and achievements
- Acknowledgements of losses within the county
- Offer thanks to all the Club and County's officials and wish the incoming committees all the best for the incoming year.

The county report is also included in the Organisations' official annual report, which is published and issued to the Directors of the Association. YFCU HQ will request a copy of your county report to be included in the official report.

HANDOVER

It is good practice to spend some time with the incoming County Secretary to brief them on the role. Talk them through this booklet and familiarise them with your approach to maintaining the County as a whole. Pass on any advice you think they will need and offer them your help and support while they are in their role. However, it is worthwhile spending time training incoming County Secretary before they take over so they understand the role, to ensure an overall wellbeing for your County.



PERSONAL QUALITIES OF A COUNTY SECRETARY

- Be an effective communicator
- Team player
- Organised
- Good leadership skills
- Positive, can do attitude
- Decision making skills
- Proactive
- Good time management skills
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Attention to detail
- Professional
- Planning skills
- Writing skills
- Reliability
- Adaptability and flexibility



QUESTIONS FOR SELF-APPRAISAL

1. Do I work effectively to maintain an efficient team?
2. Do I have 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 agendas?
5. Do I return phone calls promptly?
6. Are Clubs getting sufficient notice of upcoming events and meetings?
7. Is 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 of correct procedure.
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?
 16. Do I show appreciation to guest speakers in an appropriate way, i.e. sending thank you cards to speakers?
 17. Do I maintain a good contact with HQ, County, club officers?
 18. Do I delegate and involve the Assistant Secretary sufficiently?
 19. Am I positive about the Organisation?
 20. Do I enjoy the job of County Secretary?
 21. Am I becoming burnt out?
 22. Have I identified someone to take over from me?

APPENDIX

Agenda

Your
Home
Address
And postcode

Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of Tyrone County Committee will be held on Monday 4th September 2023
in the Tyrone Farming Society at 8pm.

It is hoped that you will be able to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Smith
Hon. Secretary

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

Minutes example

Minutes of the meeting of County Armagh Committee September 29th, 2023 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 members.

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 county 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 county sub-committee meeting after which details are to be forwarded to members.

6.2 Public Speaking

The Chair 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

County 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 YFC 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 county meeting will be in the Glens YFC hall at 8.30pm Sharp on November 16th 2023

AGM Agenda

1. Minutes
2. Business arising from minutes
3. Apologies
4. Correspondence
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election of County Officials:
 - (a) Chairman
 - (b) Vice Chairman
 - (c) Hon. Secretary
 - (d) Assistant Secretary
 - (e) Hon. Treasurer
 - (f) Assistant Treasurer
 - (g) Public Relations Officer
 - (h) Auditor
 - (i) County Sub Committee(s)
 - (j) Co-options (4)
 - (k) Person(s) suitable to make Grant Application

(l) Representative to UFU Committee

8. Nominations of Central Officials

(a) President

(b) Deputy President

(c) Vice Presidents (4)

(d) Hon. Treasurer

(e) Representatives to Central Committees:

(i) Executive (2)

(ii) Programming/Development Comm. (3)

(iii) AERA Affairs Comm. (3)

9. Any other business

GUIDELINES FOR APPOINTING A COUNTY SAFEGUARDING CHAMPION

- Must be over the age of 18
- Must be DBS cleared and hold a current Access NI certificate (required annually for YFCU volunteers)
- Must have current, in date Safeguarding training (training is required every three years and must not expire during the term of office)
- Must not be current a serving member of the County Committee in another role







Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster
475 Antrim Road
Belfast
BT15 3BD

T: 028 90 370 713
E: info@yfcu.org
www.yfcu.org

Charity Registration No: 100972
Company Registration No: NI 003964 (Northern Ireland)
Registered Office: 50 Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7FW

