



Governance Guide



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CONTENTS

1. GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF THE GAA
2. OVERVIEW & SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE
3. LEADERSHIP
4. CONTROL
5. TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY
6. OPERATING EFFECTIVELY
7. INTEGRITY

APPENDICES

- I. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- II. SELECTED GOVERNANCE POLICY DOCUMENTS
- III. DATA & CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY
- IV. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS
- V. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

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1. CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE GAA

The GAA is a community based volunteer organisation promoting Gaelic games, culture and life-long participation.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our games and our values enrich the lives of our members, our families and the communities we serve.

We welcome everybody to be a part of our Association, and we strive to listen to and respect the views of all and to operate with integrity at all times. We are accountable in all matters and at all times to our membership.



VALUE	ACTIONS
COMMUNITY IDENTITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Club is at the heart of our Association. • Everything we do helps to enrich the communities we serve. • We foster a clear sense of identity and place.
AMATEUR STATUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are a volunteer led organisation. • All our members play and engage in our games as amateurs. • We provide a games programme at all levels to meet the needs of all our players.
INCLUSIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome everybody to be part of our Association. • We are anti-sectarian. • We are anti-racist.
RESPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We respect each other on and off the playing fields. • We operate with integrity at all levels. We listen and respect the views of all.
PLAYER WELFARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide the best playing experience for all our players. • We structure our games to allow players of all abilities reach their potential.
TEAMWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective teamwork on and off the field is the cornerstone of our Association. • Ní neart go cur le chéile (There is no strength without working together).

2. THE SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Governance is the system of rules, practices and processes by which the Association and all of its Units are directed and controlled. Our rules are defined in the GAA Official Guide and the process for updating and amending those rules is well established and understood.

This document will not address the rules of the Association. Instead it will focus on the standards that we should strive to achieve in our practices and our processes in order to ensure that we continuously live by, and observe, our core principles.

It is intended that this Guide will help our units to perform to the highest standards and to offer confidence and reassurance to all who are involved in our units and who deal with them. This Guide sets our standards to be achieved under the five main principles of Governance – leading, controlling, being accountable, working effectively and behaving with integrity.

This document is not a management or operating Guide. It should however be considered in the context of the various operating guides published by the Association, some of which are included as appendices for information.



WHO DOES THIS GUIDE APPLY TO?

This Guide applies to all Units of the Association and to all its members, volunteers, officials, and employees who are charged with administration at national, provincial, county or club level.

Units for the purposes of this Guide are as defined in Section 1.9 of the Official Guide.

In some instances terminologies may be used which do not apply universally to all units. Nevertheless the principles espoused are universally valid and units are asked to apply those principles to their own structures where practicable.

The Guide is intended to provide assistance in establishing and operating the structures within Units at all levels.

Each Unit is expected to formally adopt this code, and to observe it in all regards. Units who do not do so will be required to record and rationalise their position.

This Guide augments and does not replace any of the provisions of the Code of Conduct, which sets out appropriate behaviours and practices for Officers and Members of the Association.

This Guide should be considered in the context of the legal and regulatory framework within which we operate – the laws and regulations that apply to us, as to any other organisation when it comes to administering our affairs. Clearly these provisions must also be observed and may take precedence over our own regulatory framework.



3. LEADERSHIP

Leadership in your unit of the GAA involves the following:

1. Ensuring that your particular club/county etc has a clear vision, purpose and values. These should be consistent with the Association nationally, and should be clearly communicated and evident to all members.
2. Developing appropriate strategic plans to ensure that the unit is working toward achieving its aims. The plan should be properly resourced and regularly monitored and evaluated. It may evolve over time.
3. Managing and overseeing those resources, including all of the units, volunteers and members who comprise the GAA in the county.

Individual officers are assigned specific roles and responsibilities in order to achieve this. Foremost among these is the Chairperson, who occupies the most visible leadership role and sets the tone for how the Unit will operate.

The other elected officers are also required to embody the principles of good leadership, both as members of the executive team and as leaders within their own sphere.

The various individual roles and responsibilities of GAA officers are set out in Appendix I of this Guide.

Below is a checklist of some specific action points to be undertaken:

- Agree a stated vision for the unit
- Prepare a strategic plan setting out how those goals will be pursued
- Review and refresh the plan every three years
- Establish Committees to deliver in key areas and clearly define their terms of reference
- Appoint appropriately skilled people to these groups
- Ensure each person has a clearly defined role and knows what is expected of them
- Set out a yearly work plan for each Committee
- Set goals and targets e.g. number of teams fielded, player retention etc.
- Measure performance and report progress regularly

The governance documents, and policies and procedures that should be in place in each unit are set out in Appendix II of this Guide.



4. EXERCISING CONTROL

The Management Committee (or Club Executive Committee) should control all GAA activities within its jurisdiction.

All Units and members of the Association must comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, and with the rules of the Association.

The Management Committee must ensure that appropriate internal financial and management controls are in place, and must identify and manage the principle risks facing the Association in the county.

This includes the identification of the major risks facing the unit, and appropriately managing these risks.

This is best achieved by a management system that encompasses all of the following:

- Regular and comprehensive management and financial reporting
- Effective budgetary control, with periodic reporting of variances
- Clearly understood and observed decision making procedures
- A clear and documented policy regarding delegated authorities
- Effective risk management including maintenance of a risk register

The following is a checklist of measures which characterise a good control environment

- Management Committees should meet monthly, with the agenda, supporting documentation and minutes of previous meeting circulated five working days in advance of all meetings.
- The required quorum should be defined, and accurate minutes of each meeting be recorded.
- The finance sub-Committee should meet annually with the auditors to review the accounts.
- Effective sub-Committees should be appointed (not elected) to exercise control over specific areas e.g. Strategic goal setting and implementation.
- Clear authority levels should be set out for each of these Committees. They should not exercise powers which are the preserve of the management Committee.
- A member of the Management Committee should be a member of each sub-Committee.
- Delegated authorities should be agreed for each Committee/sub-Committee.
- Officers are elected at the Annual County Convention or Club AGM in line with the Official Guide.
- Finite terms for officer-ships should be established (for those positions not covered by rule).
- Formal process should be adopted for awarding contracts, agreeing sponsorships etc.
- Trustee structure should be kept up to date.
- Risk awareness should be prioritised – a register should be prepared and regularly reviewed.
- Members of the Unit should receive appropriate training in the use of Association system.
- The Unit should have appropriate insurance in place e.g. public liability, buildings etc. and should comply with the association's insurance policies and provisions.
- The Unit complies with the terms and conditions of all grants received (from the GAA, Provincial Council and other grant awarding bodies).
- Budgets are prepared and approved prior to 30 September annually.
- The Unit has documented financial procedures for the performance of financial processes. The financial procedures should include details of key financial processes including, (but not limited to) the following:
 - Match day and ticketing income;
 - The receipt of monies – including cash handling processes;
 - Debtor management and reporting;
 - Operation of bank accounts including online accounts;

4. EXERCISING CONTROL (CONTINUED)

- The purchasing and procurement of goods and services, including the requirement to conduct a tender process for goods and services above an agreed threshold;
- Invoice approval and creditor payments, including Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payments;
- Capital expenditure;
- Expenditure authorisation limits;
- Travel & subsistence claims; and
- Payroll processing.
- A periodic income statement and balance sheet should be prepared for each meeting
- An up to date schedule of outstanding liabilities should be presented at each meeting
- A budget should be established for each key operating area – e.g. each team
- Budget variances should be reported on a timely basis
- Unusual or exceptional patterns of income and expenditure are identified, reported and monitored.
- Annual accounts should be prepared in a timely manner which, if required are audited (as set out in the Official Guide).
- Appropriate asset management policies should be in place which provide for the security and development of GAA property within its jurisdiction.
- A procurement policy should require formal tenders for expenditure in excess of defined limits.
- That policy should also include protocols regarding buying goods/services from connected parties.
- Expenditure approval authority should be limited to a small number of officers and limits defined.
- Bank mandates should be similarly defined, and up to date.
- Cash transactions should be kept to a minimum and procedures put in place to govern them.



5. TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

The inclusive nature of our Association and the high profile of our games means that a wide variety of interest groups and sections of society have a valid interest in the affairs of the GAA and of the county.

It is important the affairs of the Association at all levels are (and are perceived to be), managed in a transparent fashion. This means that those affected by or interested in the affairs and decisions of the Management Committee are aware not just of decisions and outcomes, but also have an understanding of the process by which those decisions were taken.

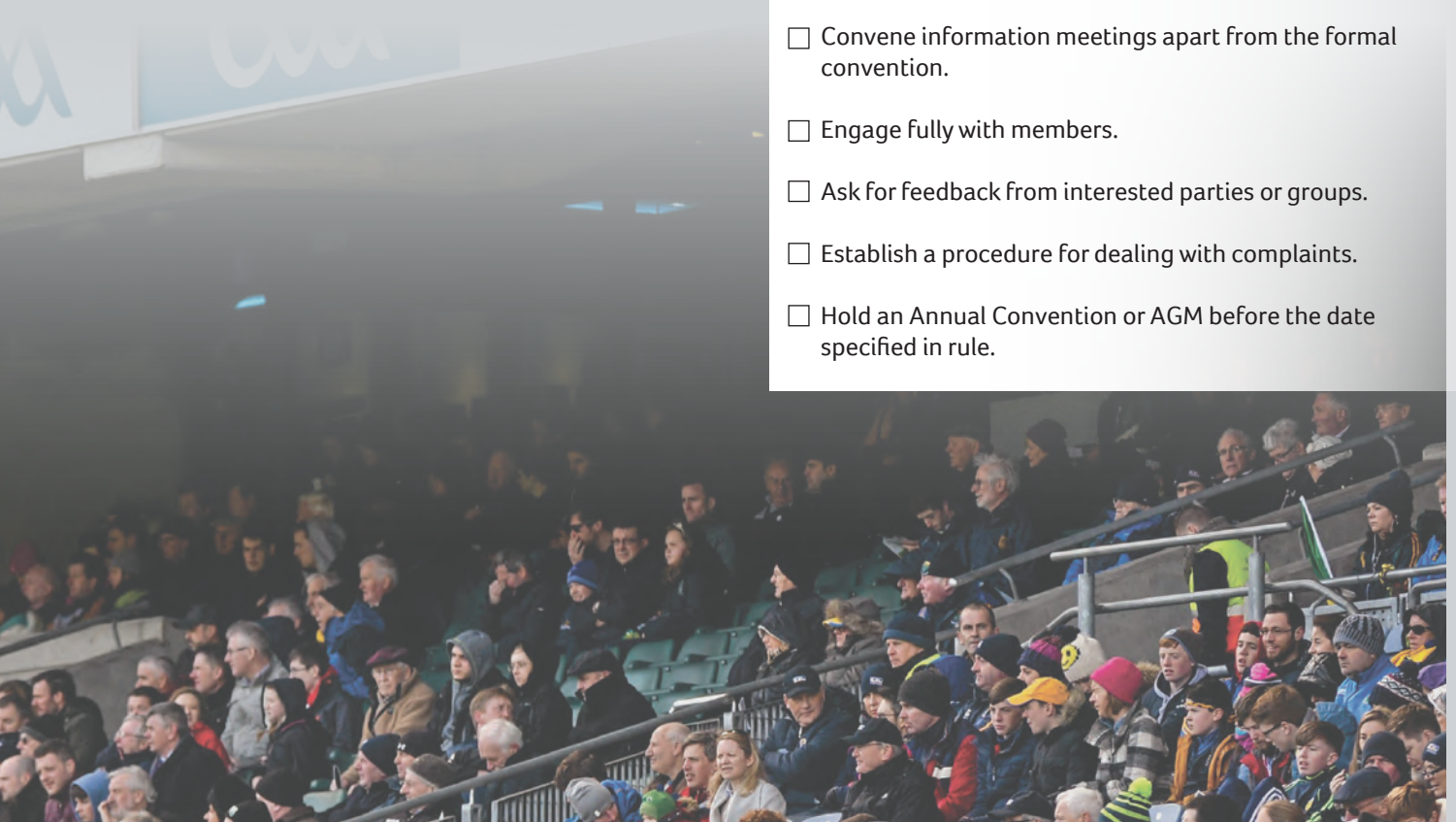
Accountability in a GAA context means that all Units of the Association and its members are held accountable for their actions. Our actions should stand up to scrutiny by members of the Association or other various stakeholders having an interest in the activities of the Association.

These principles are particularly important in our context as a democratic and volunteer-led organisation.

People and groups who have an interest in the fortunes and affairs of the Association are set out on the following pages.

Specific Actions to be undertaken by Committee members include (but are not limited to):

- Appoint, by open tender, a qualified auditor to report on the county's accounts.
- Appoint a designated person to act as public spokesperson (typically PRO).
- Ensure website and social media are actively managed and utilised.
- Ensure that the Unit has an appropriate communication procedure in place including the use of social media.
- Produce and publish regular activity updates.
- Ensure, as a minimum, that the unit meets the information requirements of lenders, funders and regulators.
- Publish the unit's commitment to this governance code.
- Set out annually any intended steps to be taken in the coming year to achieve compliance in areas where the unit is not currently in compliance.
- Convene information meetings apart from the formal convention.
- Engage fully with members.
- Ask for feedback from interested parties or groups.
- Establish a procedure for dealing with complaints.
- Hold an Annual Convention or AGM before the date specified in rule.



5. TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY (CONTINUED)

MATCH OFFICIALS

SOME OF THE PEOPLE AND GROUPS WHO HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE FORTUNES AND AFFAIRS OF THE ASSOCIATION

PLAYERS

SPORT NI

CLUBS

GENERAL PUBLIC

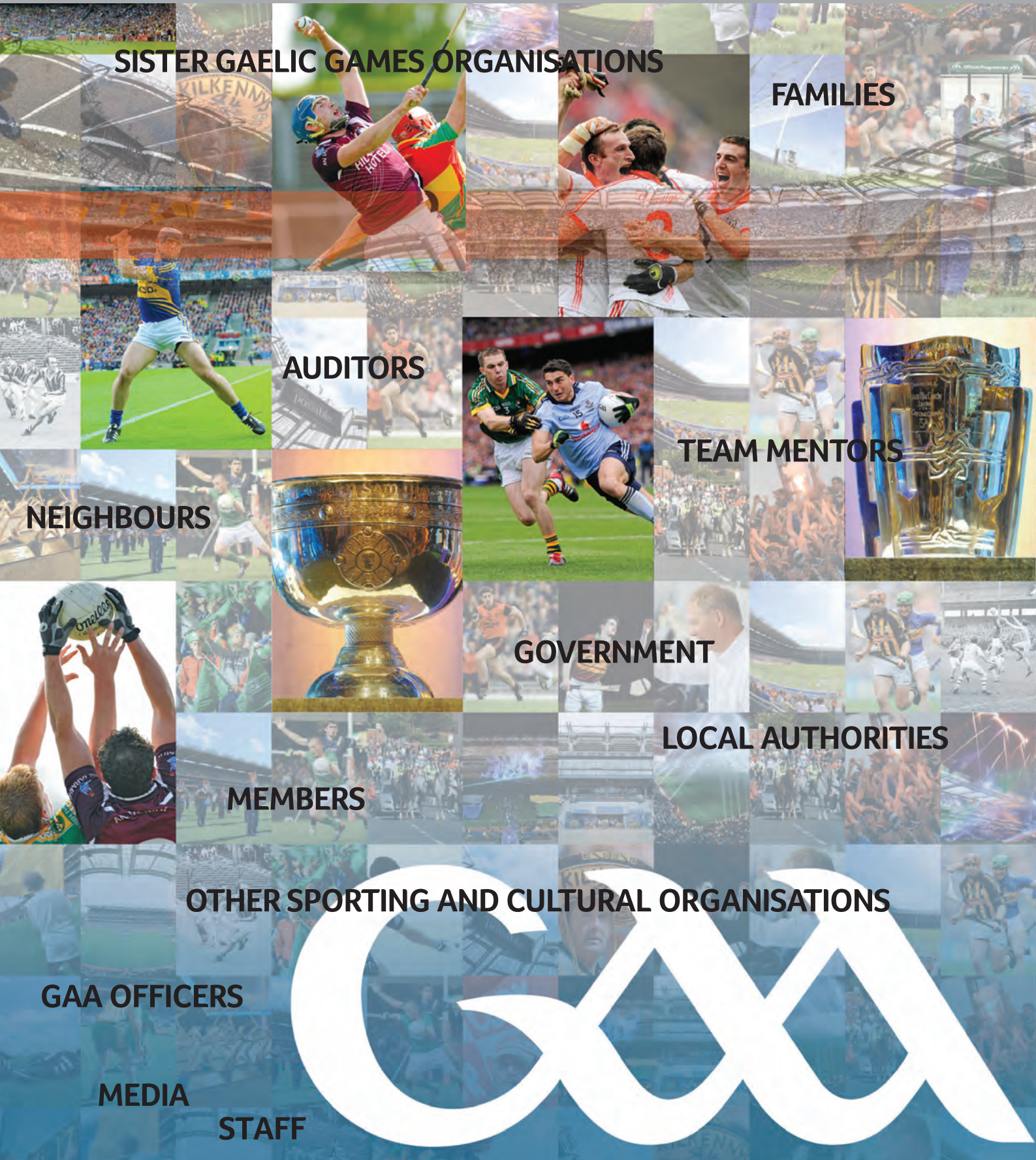
OTHER GAA UNITS

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

SPORT IRELAND

SUPPORTERS

SPONSORS



SISTER GAELIC GAMES ORGANISATIONS

FAMILIES

AUDITORS

TEAM MENTORS

NEIGHBOURS

GOVERNMENT

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

MEMBERS

OTHER SPORTING AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

GAA OFFICERS

MEDIA

STAFF



6. OPERATING EFFECTIVELY

As a voluntary organisation we owe it to our volunteers to make sure that they are asked to operate in an efficient and effective organisation. Anything less is effectively poor use of their time.

This is best achieved by making sure that Management Committees, individual Committee members, Committees, staff and volunteers understand their role, legal duties and delegated responsibility for decision-making.

Management Committees should exercise collective responsibility through Committee meetings that are efficient and effective.

Furthermore the Management Committee has a duty to ensure that these people and groups are provided with an effective management and operating structure within which to carry out their duties. In order to operate effectively it is essential that appropriate Committee structures are put in place.

Management Committees must ensure that each sub-Committee and each individual member clearly understands their role, their responsibilities and their brief.

It is important that there are suitable Committee appointment, development and training processes in place.

The characteristics of an effectively managed Committee are set out below

- Terms of Reference are in place for all Committees setting out the purpose and nature of the Committee.
- Where Committees/sub-Committees are mandated under the Official Guide, the unit adopts the Terms of Reference provided by Croke Park.
- Where Committees/sub-Committees are not mandated under the Official Guide, Terms of Reference are in place.
- Terms of reference are updated at least every three years.
- Clear roles and responsibilities are set out for each officer.
- Effective Officer training and succession planning processes are in place.
- The “place of business” of a Committee is the Club/ County/Provincial office, not an officer’s home.
- All Committees meet regularly – in line with their Terms of Reference.
- Meetings are orderly, efficient and effective, with a pre-defined agenda.
- Meetings are concluded within a reasonable and agreed time.
- Meetings are recorded.
- Actions are followed up.
- Committees review their effectiveness on an annual basis to identify improvements.
- Committees review the skills, attributes and experience that are required to operate effectively on an annual basis.



An induction or handover process for newly elected officers should be put in place which covers (but is not limited to) the following:

- The role and remit of the Committee/sub-Committee;
- Documented roles and responsibilities of specific Officers e.g. Treasurer, Secretary etc.
- Members duty to act independently in the best interest of the Unit;
- Provision of Committee minutes for the preceding 12 months;
- Roles and responsibilities of Committee members;
- Members' responsibility to maintain confidentiality of Committee meetings;
- A clear explanation of the time commitment and level of involvement required to operate as an effective Committee member; and
- Emphasising the importance of reviewing meeting agendas and documentation in advance of attendance at the Committee meeting for reasons of meeting efficiency.

Here are some specific effectiveness actions to be implemented:

- Agree and document terms of reference and scope for all sub-Committees.
- Agree "rules of engagement " regarding meetings.
- Delegate specific responsibilities and tasks, but not roles.
- Agree hand-over procedures for incoming officers.
- Ensure attendance/representation at all county/provincial training events, and ensure that delegates report back.
- Ensure that provincial council delegates / central council delegates report back to the Committee after each meeting attended.
- Ensure delegates attend such meetings with a defined and informed mandate.
- Adopt a pre-defined meeting schedule at the start of each year.



7. BEHAVING WITH INTEGRITY

Individual and collective integrity is fundamental to the protection and promotion of the GAA's reputation. Any person holding a position in the GAA at any level is expected to carry out their role in a manner that is fair, honest and independent.

All Association members must ensure that their actions do not bring the Association into disrepute.

It is essential that officers recognise conflicts of interest (or conflicts of loyalties) when they arise and have the necessary skills and framework to deal with such conflicts appropriately.

The key principals of integrity are:

- **Being honest, fair and independent.**
- **Understanding, declaring and managing conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalties.**
- **Protecting and promoting our organisation's reputation.**

Management Committees/Club Executives should seek to establish an ethical culture consistent with the general ethos of the GAA, and should be expected to apply the same ethical standards to every person and situation.

Management Committee members should recognise that although they may be elected or appointed by a particular unit their role on the Committee is not merely to represent the interests of that unit. They have a duty to serve as a leader and to promote the aims of the Association.

The Committee should adopt the GAA Code of Conduct which is updated annually, or as appropriate.

All Committee members should ensure that they:

- Strive to attend all meetings, sending apologies to the chair for necessary absences.
- Prepare for the meeting by reading the agenda, papers and any emails before the meeting.
- Respect the confidentiality of all Committee meetings.
- Talk to the chair before the meeting if you need to clarify anything.
- Arrive on time. Stay to the end.
- Participate fully in the meeting;
- Listen to what others have to say and keep an open mind.
- Contribute positively to the discussions.
- Try to be concise and avoid verbose contributions.
- Help others concentrate on the meeting. Discourage side conversations.
- Have the best interests of the organisation in mind at all times
- Draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in the meeting.
- Fulfil any responsibilities assigned to you at the meeting and be prepared to report back on your progress at the next meeting.



Conflicts of Interest

All staff, volunteers, and management Committee members of the Management Committee should strive to avoid any conflict between the interests of their Unit and the Association on the one hand, and their own personal, professional, and business interests on the other. This includes avoiding actual conflicts of interest as well as the perception of conflicts of interest.

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person has multiple interests, (personal, financial, commercial or otherwise), one of which could possibly alter the motivation of the individual in their actions or decisions.

Conflicts of interest may arise in such instances as:

- Games/Fixtures planning;
- Disciplinary decisions;
- Appointment decisions (paid and voluntary); and
- Financial decisions.

A detailed examination of this issue together with the policy to be adopted by counties is set out in Appendix VI.

Register of Committee Members Interests

A register of members' interest should be compiled, and a policy established for dealing with any conflicts of interest.

Similarly the Committee should adopt the Association's data protection policy to govern what information is collected and maintained in the name of the county, how it is maintained and stored, and who should have access to it.

Allied to this is the need for a confidentiality policy, and the concept of collective responsibility. For the Committee to operate effectively it is essential that open and honest debate can occur. This is only possible if the views expressed in meetings are kept confidential. Once a decision is arrived at it is essential that a united front is presented and collective responsibility taken.

A template for registering interests is included at Appendix V of the Code.

Protected Disclosure Policy

The GAA aims to promote an open and accountable environment in which malpractice is deterred, stakeholders' interests are protected and the good reputation of the organisation is maintained.

The GAA Protected Disclosure Policy is intended to encourage and enable Relevant persons to raise concerns within their workplace.

Please refer to the Protected Disclosure Policy on www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/administration-governance for further guidance.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAIRPERSON

- Manage – get people together to accomplish agreed goals and objectives.
- Provide leadership – motivate/encourage/mobilise people towards agreed goals
- Hold effective club meetings – guide but don't dominate; facilitate and manage discussion; assign actions; promote decision making
- Uphold constitution
- Plan – club should have a 5 year plan; where it is/ where it wants to get to and how
- Delegate – utilise skills, distribute work load, increase motivation / buy-in, develop successors
- Uphold mission and values of GAA – integrity
- Represent the club

SECRETARY

- Administration – correspondence, membership, registration, affiliation, insurance, property, county Committee, discipline
- Communication – club members, club officers, county
- Club Meetings – schedule and arrange, record and minute, follow up actions and manage outcomes, AGM
- Club Planning – as above
- Single point of contact

TREASURER

- Manage Financial affairs – receipts and payments, collect debtors, lodgements,
- Keep records
- Financial controls – sign offs, bank mandates
- Prepare financial statements – monthly and annual, manage investments, liabilities

- Budget – target, monitor, report variances, manage
- Fundraising – set targets, co-ordinate, prioritise
- Allocate resources – teams, codes, ages, playing and non-playing
- Report and inform
- Promote financial discipline

PRO

- Internal communication – officers, players, mentors, volunteers, parents
- External communication – local media, sponsors, schools, supporters, community
- Promote the club – website, social media
- Keep records – club archive, publications
- Project Club image
- Operating message – fixtures, results
- Work with county PRO – programmes
- Manage and utilise IT in the unit

Further information on County/Club Roles and responsibilities is available on <https://learning.gaa.ie/administrator>

APPENDIX II – GOVERNANCE POLICIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY GAA UNITS

The Unit should have in place formal governance policies in respect of, or dealing with (but not limited to) the following:

- Code of conduct
- Conflict of interests/conflict of loyalty
- The election, appointment and induction of new Committee members
- Term limits
- Powers reserved for Management and other sub-Committees
- Delegated authority levels
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Communication Policy (including the use of social media)
- Health & safety statement
- Data Protection
- Diversity and Equality
- Protected Disclosures Policy

The Unit should have in place formal documented policies and procedures covering (but not limited to) the following:

1. Financial procedures
2. Fraud prevention
3. Performance evaluation (for Committees/sub-Committees and Officers);
4. Risk management

These policies must not be in conflict with the rules of the Association. The unit should adopt the standard governance policies drafted by Central Council for that purpose, where available.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX III: DATA PROTECTION

GAA Units

All GAA Units are subject to Data Protection legislation and are Data Controllers in their own right. Each GAA Unit will process Personal Data relating to individual members during the course of carrying out its activities. Committee members and other designated officers of each Unit will have access to this information to fulfil their duties.

Personal Data is any information that can be used to identify a living person such as Name, Date of Birth, Address, Phone Number, Email address, Membership Number, IP Address, Photograph etc.

All Personal Data must be processed in accordance with Data Protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), Irish Data Protection Act 2018, UK Data Protection Act 2018 and all other applicable laws.

7 Principles of Data Protection

1. Lawfulness, Fairness, Transparency
2. Purpose Limitation (Use only for one or more specified purposes)
3. Data Minimisation (Collect only the amount of data required for the specified purpose(s))
4. Accuracy (Ensure data is kept up to date, accurate and complete)
5. Storage Limitation (Kept for no longer than necessary for the specified purpose(s))
6. Integrity and Confidentiality (Processed ensuring appropriate security of data)
7. Accountability (Essential not only to be compliant, but to be able to demonstrate compliance)

Individual's Data Protection Rights

Data Protection legislation enshrines certain rights for individuals that must be supported by every Data Controller, including all GAA Units.

These rights include:

- Subject Access
- To have inaccuracies & incompletions corrected
- To have information erased (in certain specific circumstances)
- To object to direct marketing
- To restrict processing of their information including

automated decision making

- Data portability - Ability to receive all of their information in a standard format to move to another provider (more relevant for switching banks or utility providers than GAA but must be supported)

Control of Data

GAA information is GAA property and should be stored and processed on official GAA systems. Access to GAA information must be restricted to Officers and members of the Club who require such access to fulfil their duties only.

Breach of Confidentiality

Any member who is breaches confidentiality may be subject to the GAA disciplinary procedures

Data Protection Officer

The GAA centrally has provided a Data Protection Officer for all GAA Units to assist with their Data Protection compliance measures. The GAA's Data Protection Officer can be contacted by email at kelly.cunningham@gaa.ie or dataprotection@gaa.ie.

Further Information

For further information relating to Data Protection within GAA Units, please see the GAA website at www.gaa.ie/dataprotection.

All Club and County Officers have access to a Data Protection Repository with up-to-date guidance and templates within their official GAA OneDrive accessible in the following manner:

Log on to Microsoft 365 with your @gaa.ie email address and choose the following menu options:
OneDrive > Shared > Shared With Me > GDPR Repository

APPENDIX IV: CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

All staff, volunteers, and management committee members will strive to avoid any conflict of interest between the interests of the unit or the Association on the one hand, and personal, professional, and business interests on the other. This includes avoiding actual conflicts of interest as well as the perception of conflicts of interest.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the integrity of the county's decision-making process, to enable our stakeholders to have confidence in our integrity, and to protect the integrity and reputation of volunteers, staff and committee members.

Examples of conflicts of interest include:

1. A committee member who is employed by, or otherwise interested in, a business that may be awarded a contract to do work or provide services for the unit
2. A committee member who is related to a member of staff and party to a decision to be taken on staff pay and/or conditions
3. A committee member who is related to a GAA member who is the subject of a disciplinary issue
4. A committee member who is also a member of or in a position of influence in another community organisation or club that is competing for the same funding
5. A committee member who owns property or other assets the value of which may be affected by a decision of the unit

If the committee member is not directly in any of the situations above, but has a direct family member who is, that will also constitute a conflict.

Upon appointment each committee member will make a full, written disclosure of interests, such as relationships, and posts held, that could potentially result in a conflict of interest. This written disclosure will be kept on file by the Secretary and will be kept updated.

Every meeting agenda should provide for declaration of any conflicts of interest. In the course of meetings or activities, committee members should themselves disclose any interest in a transaction or decision where there may be a conflict

between the organisations best interests and the committee members best interests or a conflict between the best interests of two organisations that the committee member is involved with.

After disclosure, the member may be asked to leave the room for the discussion and may not be able to take part in the decision depending on the judgement of the other committee members present at the time.

Any such disclosure and the subsequent actions taken will be noted in the minutes.

This policy is meant to supplement good judgment, and staff, volunteers and management committee members should respect its spirit as well as its wording.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX V: REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Declaration of Interest

Name

Position

Connected person or organization

Nature of relationship and/or nature of conflict of interest

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signed

Date

One form to be completed for each member of the committee annually and filed with the minutes. The register to be compiled and maintained by the County Secretary.



Pái



Cairc an Chrócaigh

