



GREAT PEOPLE, GREAT COMMITTEES

The Three Duties of a Committee Member

From Episode 4 of The Committee Room podcast. For general information only — not legal advice.

THE THREE DUTIES OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER

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Duty 1: Care *how you decide*



Oversee the activities of your organisation with the care that any ordinary, prudent person would apply to their own affairs. Be diligent, be informed. Turn up prepared. Ask questions when something doesn't make sense — you can't know all reasonable or relevant information, and it's not obvious that to other committee members. "I didn't read it" and "everyone else was voting yes" are not defences.

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Duty 2: Loyalty *whose interests you serve*



Act in the best interests of the organisation — not your own interests, nor the interests of the groups that selected you, nor those of a friend or family member. Declare conflicts of interest, leave the room during the relevant discussion and vote, and ensure conflicts are recorded in the minutes. Once the committee has made a decision — however unpopular the decision — support it publicly. Vigorous debate inside the room; one voice outside it.

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Duty 3: Obedience *what rules you follow*



Ensure the organisation uses proper processes to fulfil its purpose and complies with its rules and the law. Know your constitution and follow it. If the rules don't work, change them properly — don't quietly ignore them. Keep a close eye on the finances. Regular financial reporting is not a box-ticking exercise — it is how the committee spots warning signs early. If the organisation is struggling to pay its bills, the committee cannot simply keep operating. Continuing to incur debts when the organisation cannot meet them can make committee members personally liable. **Before that point, you need to get very good advice!**