

Role description: Chair

Dorset Community Action's (DCA's) mission is to bring people together to develop community based solutions that deliver better services for the benefit of Dorset's communities. We find innovative ways to solve complex community/social problems by:

- Developing neighbourhood infrastructure through practical community projects
- training and skills development;
- third sector development and research.

At a time of considerable funding challenges for the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, the role of Chair will be critical in providing leadership to the Board of Trustees, support the Chief Executive and Senior Management team to deliver on our Strategic Plan, and help secure DCA's long term sustainability.

Key responsibilities

- Provide leadership to the board and to ensure that trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the proper governance of the charity.
- To be a champion for Dorset Community Action (DCA) at external events and stakeholder partnerships, and bring to bear contacts across public/private/voluntary sectors in supporting the development of DCA.
- Ensure that the board works alongside the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT) in setting strategic direction, providing support and challenge when required.

Duties and tasks to fulfil the key responsibilities

To provide leadership to the board and to ensure that trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the proper governance of the charity.

To guard the long-term future of the charity by ensuring that:

- the board sets the mission, vision, strategy and high-level policies for the charity within the powers and restrictions in its charitable objects and governing instruments
- the board takes steps to monitor the performance of the charity through its strategic plan and to ensure that the charity satisfies all regulatory and legal compliance requirements
- major risks to which the charity is exposed are reviewed regularly and systems are established to manage and mitigate these risks
- the charity has a satisfactory system for holding in trust for beneficiaries; funding, properties and other assets, and ensure that funding is invested to the maximum benefit of the charity, within the constraints of the law and other policies set by the board
- the charity's financial dealings are systematically accounted for, audited and publicly available, working with the Chair of the Finance & Operations Committee (FOC).
- cheques and funding applications are signed when required.

To ensure the highest possible standards of governance by ensuring that:

- the charity has a governance structure that is appropriate to a charity of its size/complexity, stage of development, and its charitable objects and that these structures and the governing instruments are reviewed regularly.
- the board delegates sufficient authority to its committees, Chief Executive and SMT to enable the business of the charity to be carried on effectively between meetings of the board
- the board's delegated authority is recorded in writing by means of terms of reference for board committees, role descriptions for honorary officers and for key staff etc, and the board monitors use of these delegated powers.
- the board has on it the skills it requires to govern the charity well and these skills are utilised, and that the board has access to relevant external professional advice and expertise.
- there is a systematic, open and fair procedure for the recruitment and co-option of trustees, future chairs of the board and future chief executives.
- all members of the board receive appropriate induction, advice, information and training (both individual and collective).
- trustees act reasonably, always act in the interests of the charity.
- the board of trustees reviews its performance annually.

To ensure the proper and efficient conduct of board meetings by:

- chairing trustee meetings effectively, seeking consensus, balancing the need for full debate on key questions with the expeditious despatch of business so as to reach clear and agreed decisions as swiftly as possible.
- encouraging all trustees to participate and to feel free to challenge constructively both the Chair and the Chief Executive/SMT.
- taking an active role in ensuring that board agendas are meaningful and reflect the key responsibilities of trustees.
- ensuring that the board focuses on its governance and strategic role and does not stray into a management or operational role (unless essential to the good governance of the charity).
- ensuring that the Chief Executive and SMT provide the board with relevant, timely and accurate information in order to allow the board to discharge its responsibilities. This should include alerting the board to major risks, informing the board of current and future key issues, including significant trends, and informing the board about external changes which may impact on the charity
- ensuring that board decisions are made in the best, long-term interests of the charity and not personal interests, and that the board takes collective ownership of these decisions
- ensuring that decisions taken at meetings of the board are implemented
- ensuring that that there is an annual programme of board and committee meetings, carefully structured agendas and high quality briefing papers providing timely information, balancing governance, and business development to deliver on the strategic plan.
- to chair and report at the Annual General Meeting.

To support, and where appropriate, to challenge the Chief Executive/SMT and to ensure that the board as a whole works in partnership with executive staff.

To support the Chief Executive by:

- providing leadership with the Chief Executive to ensure that the charity is run in accordance with the decisions of the board and the charity's governing documents and that there is clarity about the charity's objectives at all levels
- supervising the Chief Executive on behalf of the board (unless other arrangements are made), always remembering that the Chief Executive is responsible to the board as a whole and not to any one individual trustee or sub-group of trustees
- agree with the Chief Executive respective roles in representing the charity and acting as spokesperson.
- ensuring there are clear and open processes for the recruitment of the Chief Executive, and for setting and reviewing the remuneration package of the Chief Executive
- arranging regular, meetings with the Chief Executive and by developing a professional relationship with the Chief Executive within which each can speak openly about concerns, issues, and challenges
- ensuring the Chief Executive's performance is reviewed regularly and has the opportunity for professional development and has appropriate external professional support as required.

To make sure that the board understands and fulfils its responsibility to hold the Chief Executive and the senior management team (SMT) to account by ensuring that:

- when necessary, the chair and the trustees challenge the Chief Executive and SMT constructively in the best interests of the charity and as "critical friends".
- the Chief Executive and SMT is clear about the key performance objectives by which they will be held accountable
- the Chief Executive and SMT understand their responsibility to provide relevant, honest, timely, high-quality information and advice to the board of trustees
- there are appropriate mechanisms, both internal and external, to verify that the board receives a balanced and honest picture of how the charity is performing.

Time commitment required:

- Attendance at quarterly Board meetings which are held in Wimborne
- Attendance at Finance & Operations Committee (FOC) meetings, which are held online
- Other responsibilities (approx. ½ day per week).

Person specification

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management experience; • Business development experience; • Clear and consistent communicator; • Calm approach to problem solving and conflict resolution; • A range of experience that may include business, public sector and VCSE, e.g. achieved by a business person having volunteered for VCSE organisations; • Experience of Board membership, ideally as Chair person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of contacts and links to a range of public/private sector partnerships; • Understanding of charity sector governance and financial practices; • General VCSE sector knowledge and its challenges; • Interest in some or all of DCA's strategic aims: affordable housing, health & social care, low Carbon, community led economic development, employment and enterprise, VCSE sector and community infrastructure.

N.B. DCA is an independent, apolitical organisation that has to work with all political colours and none. The chair must be able to work within and maintain these values.