

Good Scheme Secretaries



“... need to have a range of skills”

Erin Bisson
ebisson@bwcigroup.com

A pension scheme secretary is much more than just a minute taker. In a landscape with increasing focus on good governance, having an effective scheme secretary in place can help ensure a well-governed, efficient scheme and optimise member outcomes.

The role of scheme secretary

It is difficult to define in a single sentence the exact role of a scheme secretary. The tasks performed vary depending on the type of scheme, its size, number of subcommittees, the frequency of meetings and any special projects that crop up from time to time. In some cases the role will be part of the “day job” of an employee of the sponsoring employer. Indeed, for large schemes it may well be their entire day job, calling on additional support as necessary. In other cases, the scheme secretary role will be outsourced to a third party.

The breadth and variety of the secretarial function makes it an interesting, if somewhat challenging, role at times. Good organisational skills are key; it is important to plan well in advance and arrange meetings with trustees and advisors; ideally setting all of the meeting dates at the start of each year to maximise attendance.

The secretary should keep detailed records. This will help to ensure that any trustees’ decisions or delegated actions are clearly recorded. This is particularly important if a decision needs to be revisited due to a challenge or might be a useful precedent for a similar case.

Making things happen

After trustees have made decisions, the scheme secretary should ensure that they are actioned in a timely manner. This will include checking that all necessary communication occurs between all relevant parties, including the sponsoring employer where appropriate. The scheme secretary often acts as the trustees’ liaison with the administrator and assists with drafting individual member communications, managing any complaints, and investigating the background to cases where trustees need to exercise discretion.

Good scheme secretaries need to have a range of skills to ensure the smooth running of a pension scheme. They will be often have a professional qualification and will need to keep up to date with developments in the pensions industry in order to support the trustees.

A well-run scheme is a well-governed scheme, and this is so often down to having a good scheme secretary.



Scheme Secretary's Tasks

- Monitoring the annual calendar of tasks
- Keeping and maintaining the formal dispute procedure
- Keeping trustees abreast of any legislative or best practice changes
- Keeping records of any activities that have been delegated by the trustees
- Keeping and maintaining appropriate governance documentation, for example the conflicts of interest register, business plan and integrated risk management framework
- Managing and reporting any data or legislative breaches and maintaining a breaches log
- Ensuring a process is in place to call emergency meetings if necessary, for example in the event of a serious data breach
- Preparing and monitoring the scheme budget
- Assisting with trustee recruitment and arranging an induction programme for new trustees
- Monitoring the trustees’ training needs and arranging appropriate training



Location | PO Box 68, Albert House
South Esplanade, St Peter Port
Guernsey, GY1 3BY

Tel | +44 (0)1481 728432

Fax | +44 (0)1481 724082

Web | www.bwcigroup.com