



SOC finances and the role of Treasurer

Introduction

The Treasurer is a member of SOC Council and therefore a trustee of the Charity with all the duties and responsibilities that this entails. Details of these can be found in the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) guidance for charity trustees <https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/guidance-and-good-practice-for-charity-trustees/>

An interest in the financial operations of the SOC and a broad understanding of the financial requirements on charities in Scotland will be required. However, there is no need for professional qualifications.

SOC financial processes

The Council has collective responsibility for the SOC finances.

Overall financial strategy and budgeting is the responsibility of the Finance Committee. The Committee meets 3-4 times a year and is comprised of the Treasurer, the Finance Officer and two other members.

The SOC financial year runs from April to March.

SOC holds current accounts with Royal Bank of Scotland. The latest version of QuickBooks™ is the accounting software used for day-to-day book-keeping. Our investments are managed by Brewin Dolphin.

Two staff, the Treasurer and a past President (member of the Lothian branch) currently have signatory responsibility with protocols. All financial transactions over a specified amount require two signatures.

All of the day-to-day and week-to-week work is carried out by staff, with the Finance Officer having overall responsibility for all accounting and banking procedures.

Accounts updates and forecasts are provided to Council and the Club's Management Committee by the Treasurer at each of their meetings. The information for this will be prepared by the Treasurer in consultation with the Finance Officer.

The end-of-financial year process is coordinated by the Treasurer, the Finance Officer and the Independent Financial Examiner (currently Whitelaw Wells). The process concludes with the preparation of the End-of Year Accounts, independently examined, approved by Council and forwarded to OSCR.

SOC's principle core funding comes from membership subscriptions, events, sales, commission on sales of artwork and legacies. Membership represents approximately one third of total income. Legacy income is very variable and managing the expenditure to cover the peaks and troughs of legacy income is one of the principle challenges in SOC's financial planning.

SOC has a network of branches which, while part of SOC, have some financial independence and provide annual summaries of their accounts to SOC.

Cont'd >>

What's expected of the Treasurer?

The Treasurer is elected by the membership at the SOC's AGM (usually November) and the initial appointment is for two years, with re-election every two years thereafter.

In relation to the process outlined, staff and branch officials may be in touch with the Treasurer for advice and direction by phone and email on occasion.

The Treasurer is expected to attend Council and Management Committee meetings, both of which currently take place four times a year. Council meetings are held at RSPB Loch Leven and Management Committee meetings at SOC HQ (Waterston House, Aberlady, East Lothian), noting that in light of the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions, all meetings are currently being held via video conference. The Treasurer is expected to provide a written update of the current financial position at these meetings. This usually takes the form of a quick summary of the current financial year profit and loss and comparison with the same stage in previous years.

The Treasurer is responsible for convening the Finance Committee, setting an agenda and chairing the meetings. Meetings will be held on average 3-4 times a year. Financial planning is conducted through the Finance Committee, where SOC's broad funding position, future needs, subscriptions, staff remuneration, etc., are considered. The Treasurer has the responsibility of informing Council on the recommendations from the Committee.

The Treasurer is expected to attend and provide a summary of the End-of-Year Accounts at the Club's Annual General Meeting, normally held in late November.

The Treasurer is expected to meet (either in person or via video conference) with our Edinburgh-based investment managers, Brewin Dolphin, at least annually, to review the performance of SOC's investments and to confirm the level of risk attached to them. The Treasurer is also expected to ensure, through discussion at Council, the maintenance and update of SOC's Investment Policy, including the level of reserves to be aimed for.

The Treasurer should liaise regularly with the Finance Officer, ensuring the smooth operation of day-to-day accounting and being made aware of major income or expenditure items.

Besides this, there may be a need to consult the Treasurer (and other office bearers) on HR issues and the induction of new Trustees.

Other points

Out-of-pocket expenses incurred by trustees on SOC business will be reimbursed.

Date: 19th October 2020