

What it means to be an RSPCA trustee

Members of the Council are the charity trustees of the RSPCA, being the persons having 'the general control and management of the administration of the charity' as defined by the Charities Act 1993.

Key role

Legally, charity trustees must act reasonably and prudently in matters relating to the charity and only act in its best interests.

Charity trustees must not benefit personally, either directly or indirectly, from the charity. To do so would be a breach of trust. However, charity trustees are entitled to be reimbursed from the charity's funds for expenses properly incurred by them in the performance of their duties.

Trustees must ensure that the income and property of the charity are applied exclusively in pursuance of the RSPCA's charitable objects and in accordance with the powers conferred by the RSPCA's governing documents.

The Society's objects are 'to promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals, and to do all such lawful acts as the RSPCA may consider to be conducive or incidental to the attainment of those objectives'.

Working together

Trustees must be able and willing to give time to the effective leadership and direction of the charity, but they do not act alone.

RSPCA trustees act collectively through the operation of the Society's governing body, the Council. There is a collective and corporate responsibility. Trustees should be decisive, guard against dominant individuals, and not allow private interests to influence them.

Council must act strategically so that it can safeguard the RSPCA's future and plan its future direction.

Trustee skills

Collectively, the Council should have the skills, knowledge and experience to govern the charity economically and effectively.

The business of the Council is not always directly related to animal welfare. The Council plans and monitors a wide range of activities and has to consider financial, legal and other business matters to ensure the effective use of the resources available to the RSPCA.

The Council expects its members to be able to think creatively, probe facts, challenge assumptions, monitor activities and display good independent judgement. The ability to work effectively within a team, and to be able to consider the issues facing the RSPCA at a strategic level, is essential.

Rewarding task

Being a trustee can be a difficult and time-consuming task. But it also allows you, with your fellow trustees, to contribute in a very significant way to the achievement of the RSPCA's objectives.

You will have the satisfaction of knowing that your involvement is helping animals everywhere.

Further info

For further information on the duties of RSPCA charity trustees, please contact us on 0300 123 0369.

The Charity Commission is responsible to the Home Secretary for both regulating and advising charities. You can download a booklet called *CC3 - The Essential Trustee: What you need to know* from their website at:

http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/ccpubs3.aspx