

## **Citizens Advice Eastbourne - Trainee Chair**

**Citizens Advice Eastbourne** is looking to recruit someone willing to be trained and supported to take over as Chair of the Board of Trustees from October 2023.

With so many local people struggling to cope with the rising cost of living at the moment, Citizens Advice Eastbourne is playing a vital role supporting people to access the benefits and support they are entitled to. We are now offering an opportunity for someone who wants to use their skills to make a real difference to their local community to be trained to take over as Chair of our Board of Trustees from October 2023 when our current Chair steps down.

We are a small organisation run by a dedicated and experienced Board of Trustees with a great team of staff and fantastic volunteers giving advice and support to people in desperate need.

If you are looking for a way to use your leadership skills and share our values, we would love to hear from you. You do not have to have had any previous experience of working or volunteering with Citizens Advice but you will need some experience of serving as a Director, committee member or Trustee.

We are offering up to a year's handover period, during which time you will be provided with plenty of training and mentored by the current Chair. In addition, as members of Citizens Advice, we can access a wide range of training opportunities, guidance and information to support the role.

Like all our Trustees, you will need to share our values, devote the necessary time, have independent judgement, a desire to contribute, an ability to think creatively and the willingness to take a lead role in the governance and development of our work. You will join an experienced Board of ten trustees collectively responsible for directing our strategy and policy and for ensuring that the charity makes good decisions and safeguards its future.

In return you will have the opportunity to support and develop an organisation which plays an essential and well-respected role in the civil society of this town, and is a true lifeline for many of its most disadvantaged citizens.

This document gives details of our expectations of all trustees. For a full description of the Trainee Chair role please see pages 7 and 8

To find out more or express an interest in this role, please write to [manager@eastbournecab.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:manager@eastbournecab.cabnet.org.uk)

## **Expectations of trustees**

You will be asked to attend five board meetings per year, and either to join a sub-committee or otherwise become actively involved in at least one area of the charity. In addition, you will need to spend time preparing for these meetings and undertaking any follow up work. As a guide, we anticipate you will be expected to contribute 1-2 days per month initially, although this will fluctuate through the year.

New trustees are initially co-opted onto the board, to serve until the next Annual General Meeting (usually in October or November), at which point, under our constitution, they may be nominated to serve as a Trustee and, in some cases, elected as an officer for a full three-year term. Trustees can, of course, resign before that as long as there remain sufficient ongoing trustees for the charity to function, and trustees can also stand for re-election at the end of their three-year term. However, the expectation is that anyone standing as a trustee should be prepared in normal circumstances to serve at least one three-year term in order to provide a reasonable level of stability to the board.

Nomination to the role of Chair will be subject to election at the AGM in the usual way.

## **Support offered**

We pay trustees' travel expenses, provide an induction to the organisation, and can help you to access training. As a new trustee and trainee Chair, you will be offered the opportunity to "buddy" with the current Chair during your first year.

As members of the national Citizens Advice network, we also have access to a wealth of online resources, workshops and networking events to help you learn more about the role, about Citizens Advice and about what other local Citizens Advice charities are doing.

## **To apply**

If you would like to know more about the role, please contact our Chief Officer, Alan Bruzon, at [manager@eastbournecab.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:manager@eastbournecab.cabnet.org.uk) to arrange an informal telephone call. The trustee role description, and information about Citizens Advice Eastbourne, is included in this mailing. For additional supporting information visit:

<http://www.eastbournecab.co.uk/>.

## **About Citizens Advice Eastbourne (CAE)**

We provide free, confidential and impartial advice and we campaign on big issues affecting people's lives. Our goal is to help everyone find a way forward, whatever problem they face.

We are part of the Citizens Advice network across England and Wales. However, we are an individual, local charity responsible for our own governance and our own fundraising.

People come to us with all sorts of issues. You may have money, benefits, housing or employment problems; or your problem may be something else entirely. You may be facing a crisis or just considering your options. Whatever your issue, we will explain your rights and we will give you the information you need to understand your options and make informed choices. Wherever we can, we will support you in finding a way forward.

We value diversity, promote equality, and challenge discrimination wherever we see it.

Our service is delivered by a small, highly committed team of paid staff who supervise over 50 volunteers; it is these volunteers who form the backbone of our service. All our volunteer advisors are trained to national Citizens Advice quality standards.

Our client work gives us a substantial evidence base from which we monitor emerging trends and themes. Where we identify these, we use our strong reputation and standing with local policymakers to get changes made that will improve people's lives. For example, in the past year we have agreed a minimum standard of temporary accommodation with Eastbourne Borough Council and have released a well-received report on Homelessness in Eastbourne.

## **Roles and responsibilities of our trustees**

Each individual member of the trustee board has a responsibility to contribute to the discharging of the board's duties. They can do this by:

- maintaining an awareness of the business of the local Citizens Advice
- taking responsibility for their own learning and development
- regularly attending, preparing for and taking a full part in meetings
- actively contributing to setting policy and strategic direction, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance
- monitoring whether the service complies with its governing document, whether it meets Citizens Advice standards and how well the advice needs of the local community are being met
- monitoring the financial position and ensuring that the local Citizens Advice operates within its means and objects, and that there are clear lines of accountability for day-to-day financial management
- supporting the development of the local Citizens Advice through participation in agreed projects
- actively seeking to further the strategic objectives of the local Citizens Advice, and acting in its best interests at all times
- maintaining confidentiality about any sensitive or confidential information received in the course of duties as a trustee.

In addition to these, the general duties of trustees are to:

- ensure the organisation applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives. The organisation must not spend money on activities which are not included in its own objectives, no matter how worthwhile or charitable those activities are
- safeguard the good name and values of the organisation when representing the organisation at functions and meetings
- declare any conflict of interest while carrying out the duties of a trustee
- be collectively responsible for the actions of the organisation and other trustees
- ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation
- abide by the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- ensure the financial stability of the organisation
- protect and manage the property of the organisation and ensure the proper investment of the organisation's funds
- make sure the organisation is properly insured against all reasonable liabilities
- appoint and support the Chief Executive and monitor their performance

As well as the above statutory duties of all trustees, each trustee should use any specific knowledge or experience they have to help the trustees reach sound decisions. This will involve scrutinising trustee papers, leading discussions, focusing

on key issues, and providing advice and guidance requested by trustees on new initiatives and other issues.

## **Trustee person specification**

Each individual member of the trustee board brings their own unique skills and qualities to the board. They add to the collective knowledge and experience by providing:

- integrity
- commitment and availability to attend trustee board meetings
- effective communication skills and willingness to participate actively in discussion
- willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to their duties as a trustee
- willingness to gain knowledge of local needs and resources
- commitment to the aims, principles and policies of the Citizens Advice service, including those relating to equality, inclusivity and diversity, independence, and research and campaigns
- willingness and ability to act in the best interests of the local Citizens Advice
- ability to understand, and acceptance of, their responsibilities and obligations as trustees and employers
- willingness to participate in democratic process which develops Citizens Advice policies by area and nationally
- numeracy to the extent required to understand accounts with the support of a treasurer
- willingness and ability to learn, and to develop and examine their own attitudes
- ability to think creatively and strategically, and exercise good, independent judgement
- ability to work effectively as a member of a team.

## **Chair role description**

The Chair should take control of meetings, ensuring that everyone who wishes to has a reasonable chance to speak and take part. She or he should be able to listen to and understand a wide range of views, present information clearly and concisely and get clarification of relevant points, thus enabling the board to make effective decisions. The board must demonstrate its leadership of the organisation. It is the chair's role to enable the board to do that.

In addition to the general trustee board responsibilities, the chair will be responsible for the following duties (although in some cases these may be delegated to or shared with other board members).

## **Main duties and responsibilities**

Some of these are likely to be delegated to or shared with other trustees.

- Ensuring that board decisions are made within the remit of the governing document and the policies of Citizens Advice
- Planning the annual cycle of board meetings, and chairing and facilitating these to ensure their smooth running
- Planning the agenda for meetings with Citizens Advice Eastbourne (CAE) Chief Executive
- Developing membership of the trustee board to ensure that it contains the diverse range of skills, experience and knowledge needed to operate effectively, with due consideration for community representation
- Ensuring that successors for key posts - treasurer, chair etc. - are identified and inducted in good time
- Ensuring that trustees receive induction and adequate training to enable them to fulfil their roles
- Monitoring the calibre, level of commitment and attendance of all trustees
- Ensuring that the board reviews its own work and how effectively it operates; making sure to take any corrective action required
- Ensuring that the board is able to seek the views of all sections of the community served by CAE
- Checking that decisions taken at meetings are being implemented
- Ensuring that the board reviews the work of CAE
- Liaising with CAE's Chief Executive to keep an overview of CAE's business
- Providing or arranging for support and supervision for CAE's Chief Executive, including annual appraisal

- In conjunction with the treasurer, ensuring proper management and control of bureau finances
- Representing CAE in the community and at public events
- Representing CAE in relationships with funders and negotiating for funds for staffing, premises or equipment
- Ensuring that CAE plans for the recruitment and turnover of paid staff and volunteers.

### **Personal skills and qualities**

- leadership skills
- experience of chairing meetings and committee work
- facilitation skills
- tact and diplomacy
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences.

It is desirable for the chair to have knowledge of the type of work undertaken by CAE and a commitment to keeping ahead of the changes in the organisation that take place.