

Commentary

How structured governance positions SC Villa sustainably

Sports Club Villa remains one of Uganda's most historic and decorated football institutions, and beyond its success on the pitch, its governance structure provides important lessons about how structured leadership and constitutional order can shape the long-term growth of a community-owned sports club.

Founded in 1975 and later renamed SC Villa in 1981, the club operates under the Villa Members' Trust (VMT), a member-based ownership model that distinguishes it from privately owned football entities and places governance authority in a trust framework designed to safeguard institutional continuity.

Under this structure, leadership is exercised through an elected Executive Committee that serves for a fixed term as stipulated by club statutes, with defined portfolios including president, chief executive officer, vice presidents responsible for finance, technical, administration and fan mobilization, secretary general, spokesperson and women affairs representation, creating a portfolio-based governance system that encourages specialization and accountability.

In November 2021, Omar Ahmed Mandela was sworn in as president following an electoral process organized under the club's procedures, and the executive assumed office under a five-year mandate expected to run until 2026, reflecting a constitutional approach to leadership tenure.

Fixed mandates are critical in sports governance because they provide leadership stability while preventing indefinite occupation of office, thereby balancing continuity with democratic renewal, and in the case of SC Villa, and the defined term reinforces predictability in planning and institutional management.

The presence of a Board of Trustees under the Villa Members' Trust adds an additional oversight layer, ensuring that executive authority operates within a broader governance framework rather than as an isolated management structure.

In 2025, former club president Eng. Ben Immanuel Misagga, who led the club between 2014 and 2018, publicly questioned whether the executive mandate had expired and formally requested documentation to clarify the leadership's legal standing, including financial and operational records, an action that was reported in the media and directed at the club's trustees.

These documented concerns, while representing one side of an internal governance debate, demonstrate that accountability mechanisms exist within the club's structure and that former leaders and members can invoke constitutional scrutiny through formal channels.

Reports also indicate that the club acknowledged that elections were due under the five-year framework, signa-

ling recognition of statutory timelines even as administrative processes and internal procedures determine the scheduling and organization of such elections.

From a governance perspective, the combination of fixed mandates, trustee oversight, electoral processes and the ability of stakeholders to demand documentation reflects a structured institutional environment that, when properly managed, can strengthen rather than weaken a football club.

For SC Villa, adherence to statutes and clarity around election timelines are not merely procedural matters but foundations for commercial credibility, regulatory compliance and stakeholder confidence, especially in a modern football environment where governance standards increasingly influence sponsorship, partnerships and federation relations.

Member-based governance, when supported by transparent communication and timely electoral processes, encourages shared ownership and collective responsibility, reducing the risks associated with personalized or personality-driven administration.

The existence of specialized executive portfolios further enhances operational clarity by assigning defined responsibilities for finance, technical performance, administration and fan engagement, which are essential pillars for a club competing in a professional league environment.

While public scrutiny and internal debate can create short-term tension, they can also reinforce institutional maturity if managed within constitutional frameworks, as open questions about mandate timelines prompt reaffirmation of statutes and procedural compliance.

For SC Villa, the path to becoming stronger lies in continued commitment to transparent elections, documented decision-making, clear communication from trustees and executives, and consistent alignment with its constitutional provisions.

Good sports club governance depends on predictable leadership cycles, financial transparency, independent oversight and participatory structures, and the verified facts surrounding SC Villa's governance architecture show that the club possesses these foundational elements.

If reinforced through timely electoral processes and proactive stakeholder engagement, this governance model can help SC Villa not only preserve its legacy but also position itself as a benchmark for structured, member-driven football administration in Uganda.

The presence of trustees under the VMT adds an additional oversight layer.



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