

Conflict of Interest Policy



Introduction

This policy applies to all Trustees and Staff of Tunbridge Wells Baptist Church (TWBC).

All Staff and Trustees of TWBC have a duty to act in the best interests of TWBC when making decisions in their TWBC roles.

If there is a decision to be made where a Staff Member or Trustee has a personal or other interest, this is a conflict of interest and they will not be able to comply with their duty unless certain procedures are followed.

This policy describes situations in which conflicts of interest may arise and the procedures to follow.

About conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest arises when a Staff Member or Trustee is making a decision about the charity that would result in a financial benefit either directly or through someone who is connected to the Staff Member or Trustee.

Charity Trustees have a legal duty to avoid or state any conflict of interest and manage it appropriately as seen below.

Managing conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest may be inevitable. Therefore, it is necessary to act to prevent them from interfering with the ability to make a decision in the best interests of the charity.

The Charities Commission recommends following a three-step approach (identify, prevent, record) so that Trustees are able to comply with their duty.

1. Identify conflicts of interest.

All TWBC Staff and Trustees are required to declare their interests, and any gifts or hospitality received from a commercial party in connection with their role.

To this effect the following needs to be implemented:

- Any newly-appointed Staff Member or Trustee should complete and sign a Declaration of Interests form within one calendar month of being appointed and thereafter when any changes occur. Declaration forms are available from the Church Secretary.
- In addition, a new Declaration of Interests form must be completed as soon as any declaration is over three years' old.
- TWBC should maintain an updated document containing a registry of conflicts of interest. Any such conflicts of interest should be minuted at the earliest opportunity within the minutes of a Leadership Team Meeting and/or Church Members' Meeting.

The above information will be processed in accordance with data protection principles as set out in the most recent Data Protection Act. Data will be processed only to ensure that Staff Members and Trustees of TWBC act in the best interests of TWBC. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

In the course of a Church meeting, Staff Members and Trustees will disclose any interests in a transaction or decision where there may be a conflict between the church's best interests and the Staff Member's or Trustee's personal interests, or a conflict between two organisations that the Staff Member or Trustee is involved with. If in doubt, the conflict must be declared anyway, and clarification sought.

2. Prevent the conflict of interest.

Once a conflict of interest is identified, prevent it from affecting the decision-making by:

- finding an alternative way forward which doesn't involve the conflict of interest (particularly if the issue is serious).
- taking appropriate steps to manage the conflict (if it's less serious), which will usually mean that the person affected doesn't take part in discussions about the issue.

In the event of a conflict of interest which could affect the aims and objectives of TWBC, the person(s) involved may not participate in any decision on matters affecting that interest.

3. Record a conflict of interest.

Keep a written record of the conflict of interest and how it is dealt with in the minutes of the meetings. Explain:

- what sort of conflict of interest it was?
- which Trustee(s) or employee(s) was affected?
- if any conflicts of interest were declared in advance
- an outline of the discussion
- if anyone withdrew from the discussion
- how the decision is made in TWBC's best interest

All decisions under a conflict of interest will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The minute will record: the nature and extent of the conflict and the actions taken to manage the conflict.

Where a Trustee benefits financially from the decision, this will be reported in the annual report and accounts produced.

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