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# TRUSTEE HANDBOOK

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[PARISH NAME]

Serving the Church of Ireland and our community as a member of a select vestry is a privilege that allows members of the Church to use their skills to support the parish in a special way. Such a volunteer effort has been the backbone of the Church of Ireland since disestablishment in 1870.

Recent revisions of charities regulation have not fundamentally changed the work of being a trustee that comes with being a member of the select vestry or the high standard of governance for which the Church of Ireland has always been known, only that trustees must now ensure that they are able to proactively and transparently demonstrate the work they are doing to ensure such good governance.

The parish must ensure that any select vestry members fully understand their role on the vestry, the rules around serving as a charity trustee and the things that might make them ineligible to serve. This document summarizes the required information regarding charity trusteeship, and it is important that all those who wish to stand for election to the select vestry should read it.

If a prospective or newly elected member of the select vestry has a concern regarding their eligibility to act as a charity trustee, they can raise their concerns confidentially with the Charity Commission directly and the regulator will advise on the matter. If the CCNI advises that an individual may not serve, they should withdraw from the process.

All elected members of the select vestry should ensure that they read and understand the material in Section 1 and have signed the documents noted in Section 2 to confirm their position as charity trustees.

Elected members of the select vestry will be supported in delivering their role effectively with further guidance and support from the diocesan office and the central church.

**[Section 1]** is the information around eligibility to serve, *Code of Conduct policy* and the *Statement of Charitable Purpose and Objects* for the parish. Please read these.

**[Section 2]** is a short list of documents which trustees must complete upon election to the select vestry, with notes on where these can be found.

**[Section 1]****ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE AS A CHARITABLE TRUSTEE NI**

Individuals who are not eligible to be trustees under charity legislation includes anyone who:

- Has been convicted of an offence, particularly if involving deception or dishonesty or related to a safeguarding matter
- Is an undischarged bankrupt or has made an arrangement with creditors
- Has previously been removed as a trustee by the charities regulator or a Court

If a person is not eligible to be a trustee, it is their responsibility not to make themselves available for election to the select vestry. Therefore it is important that members of the general vestry are made aware of the requirements around charity trusteeship before they allow their names to be nominated for election. Where a potential trustee has a concern, it is advisable that the individual arranges with the officiating member of the clergy that their name not be put forward at the Easter vestry. If a serving member of the select vestry becomes disqualified, it is their responsibility to stand down from the select vestry.

Where an individual is unsure about their eligibility, they should seek advice directly from the regulatory body (the CCNI) as circumstances may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The regulator is likely to be more concerned where there is evidence of fraud or deception rather than an unfortunate personal situation.



## Code of Conduct for Trustees

By reading this document and accepting the role of a charity trustee of [PARISH NAME] all charity trustees agree to the following responsibilities:

### General Conduct

- Charity trustees are required to act with honesty and integrity and exercise good judgement which may include seeking professional advice on appropriate matters on which charity trustees do not have relevant expertise.
- Charity trustees are required to act in the best interests of the charity at all times.

### Independence

- Charity trustees are required to act independently, particularly in relation to assets, property, legal and regulatory obligations.
- Charity trustees should conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner which does not damage or undermine the reputation of the charity or its volunteers and employees. More specifically charity trustees:
  - should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties;
  - must avoid actual impropriety and any appearance of improper behaviour.
- Charity trustees must not act in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves or for any persons connected to them such as their family, their friends, or any organisation that they own, manage or work for.
- Charity trustees should avoid accepting gifts and hospitality that might reasonably be thought to influence them in carrying out their role as charity trustee. Any gifts or hospitality received in any connection to the Parish should not exceed the value of €50.00 and should be declared to the Select Vestry.

### Charity Trustee Roles

Charity trustees should:

- Understand and perform their roles and responsibilities to the best of their abilities at all times.
- Be prepared to provide adequate time and commitment as required to fulfil the role of charity trustee, adequately preparing for meetings and participating in committees and special events when required.

### Select Vestry Meetings

Charity trustees should:

- Aim to attend all meetings, contribute appropriately and effectively, and avoid dominating the contributions of others.
- Always respect the authority of the Chairperson of the Select Vestry, and the Chairperson of any meeting.
- Bring a fair and open-minded view to all discussions of the Select Vestry, maintain a respectful balance between speaking and listening, treating different views with respect, and ensuring that all decisions are made in the best interests of the charity.
- Bring a genuinely independent perspective to enhance decision-making, given that charity trustees share responsibility for Select Vestry decisions.
- Ensure their contributions are informed and impartial when presenting views on topics in meetings while listening to and respecting the input and experience of other charity trustees.

### **Volunteers/Employees within the Charity**

Charity trustees should:

- Aim to support volunteers and employees in carrying out their duties and always, in terms of their conduct, serve as an example of how everyone in the charity should conduct themselves in order to reflect the values of the charity.
- Work considerately and fairly with everyone in a way that respects diversity, different roles and boundaries and avoids giving offence.
- Accept and respect the difference in roles between the Select Vestry on the one hand and volunteers and any employees on the other, ensuring that the Select Vestry, volunteers and any employees work effectively and cohesively for the benefit of the charity and develop a mutually supportive and loyal relationship by:
  - respecting management arrangements and avoiding any actions that might undermine such arrangements;
  - not interfering in the performance by volunteers or employees of duties delegated to them within the charity while ensuring that volunteers and any employees working for the charity are held to account through the manager/CEO, as appropriate.

### **Legal Requirements and Policies**

Charity trustees must:

- Act in accordance with the charity's governing document and ensure that the charity complies with all applicable laws including charity law, company law, health and safety law, data protection law and employment law.
- Promote and preserve the obligations of confidentiality about sensitive Select Vestry matters. However, the requirement for confidentiality may not apply if it becomes necessary for the charity trustee to inform the Charities Regulator or any other statutory body about any matter, which could threaten the future of the charity or could represent a breach of any law with which the charity is required to comply.
- Abide by the [PARISH NAME]'s conflict of interests or loyalties policy and ensure the charity's conflict of interest register is completed and updated as required.
- Abide by any equality, diversity, safeguarding, health and safety, bullying and harassment policies and any other policies agreed by the Select Vestry or central Church bodies (General Synod, Standing Committee, Representative Church Body, Diocesan Councils, Diocesan Synods).
- Ensure that claims for out of pocket expenses are made in accordance with agreed procedures.

Where a charity trustee is found to be in breach of the standards outlined by the Select Vestry in its Code of Conduct he or she will be asked to meet with the Chairperson of the Select Vestry to assess his or her suitability for the role. Consistent breach of the Code of Conduct by a charity trustee may result in the trustee's tenure being terminated.

The Select Vestry of charity trustees should review this Code of Conduct for trustees at 3-year intervals or as appropriate.

## **Charitable Purpose and Objects and Statement of Public Benefit.**

In accordance with the requirements of charities legislation, the Church has adopted a Statement of Charitable Purpose and Objects (NI) and a Statement of Public Benefit (NI). These statements were approved by the General Synod and, in 2020 a new chapter was added to the Constitution to bring together all of the provisions relating to these requirements – Chapter 17. Every new member of the select vestry needs to be aware of Chapter 17, and to understand the broad context of charity legislation within which the Church operates.

### **NORTHERN IRELAND STATEMENT OF CHARITABLE PURPOSE AND OBJECTS**

*The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion. The principal function of the parish select vestry is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, educational and ecumenical. Being open to and engaging with society as a whole and offering support for those needing help are fundamental to the practical delivery of the benefits of Christianity. As a result of activity in the pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion, the parish select vestry has custody of property and of records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage and maintenance of which is undertaken by the parish.*

#### **Part III**

#### **STATEMENT OF PUBLIC BENEFIT (NI)**

##### **Purpose 1**

*The expression of the precepts of the Christian religion through engagement with the general public, and in particular with the disadvantaged, the sick, the elderly and the young is a public benefit. This can be measured and evidenced through increased social integration and pastoral care delivered at the point of need. The direct benefit of participation in Church life includes the enjoyment of public worship and the giving and receiving of pastoral ministry, improved understanding of the values relating to civic engagement, community cohesion and providing a bridge between diverse groups as well as improved educational outcomes through the Church's ministry of teaching.*

*The beneficiaries are the general public, and the public valuation of the benefits can be evidenced through attendance at public worship, participation in Church governance and willingness to support through contributions the continuing witness of the Church. The wider benefit to the public will outweigh any detriment arising in the course of Christian outreach. Any private benefit arising out of the fulfilment of our Christian ministry or to lay staff is essential to the fulfilment of the purpose of the advancement of religion. No Trustee may receive remuneration, reward or other private benefit for carrying out their Trustee responsibility.*

##### **Purpose 2**

*The direct benefits flowing from this purpose include the provision of archive records, public enjoyment of cultural and historic buildings and artefacts such as church plate, furnishings and materials as well as an overall improved appreciation of longstanding Christian heritage.*

*This is demonstrated through on-going provision of access to records and the use made of these records in, for example, research and genealogy, through conservation efforts in respect of records, property and artefacts and the subsequent and continued requests for access and use of our materials by wider society. There is no harm arising from the purpose. The beneficiaries are the general public. No private benefit is received by Trustees fulfilling their Trustee responsibilities in respect of these records, buildings or artefacts, but in the course of conservation and to make these accessible to the public, the engagement of professional staff and services is essential but incidental to the fulfilment of the purpose.*

**[Section 2]****Trustee Declaration Form**

Once elected all trustees must complete a trustee declaration form. Signed declarations should be retained by the charity for future reference. This form can be found on the parish resources section of the Church of Ireland website.

[NI- Trustee Declaration](#)

**Trustee Details Form**

As part of charity registration and for the purpose of good governance each trustee should complete a copy of the RCB Trustee Details Form. These forms are to be retained by the parish and stored in a secure location in line with GDPR requirements.

[Trustee Details Form](#)

