ALL SAINTS BIDDENDEN PCC

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Preamble

Those responsible for administering a charity (the charity trustees) must act in the best interests of the charity. This means that decisions must be made only by reference to the charity's interests, and not influenced by personal interests, loyalties, or other considerations.
Charity trustees must therefore avoid placing themselves in a position where their duty to act in the charity's best interests could conflict with a personal interest or another loyalty.

Responsibilities

In practice, this has implications both for individual charity trustees and for the trustees acting collectively:

- individual charity trustees must identify and declare any conflict of interest; and
- the charity trustees collectively must ensure that arrangements are in place to identify and manage conflicts of interest effectively.

Early identification of conflicts is essential to ensure that individual trustees, and the trustees as a group, meet their responsibilities.

Purpose of this policy

This policy is intended to ensure that the discussions and decisions of the charity trustees are not influenced by interests outside the charity. Its purpose is to make sure that anything which may affect an individual trustee's contribution to a decision is identified, handled appropriately, and recorded. The Charity Commission's guidance provides further general guidance for charities.

Application to the PCC

A Parochial Church Council (PCC) is in the same position as any other charity in this respect. Its charity trustees, meaning all individual members of the PCC, have a legal duty to act in the PCC's best interests.
The church is also an integral part of community life. This may give rise to conflicts where the PCC's best interests could differ from those of other community organisations. Conflicts may also arise from personal or family circumstances.
If a conflict is not identified and managed properly, it may lead to decisions or actions that are not in the PCC's best interests. In cases involving personal interests, it may also result in an unauthorised benefit for one or more PCC members. See also the Parish Resources *Guidance Note: PCC members and private benefit*.
Conflicts of interest can take many forms. Some will make it inappropriate for the individual concerned to participate in a discussion or decision. Others may simply need to be identified and declared, allowing the individual to continue contributing their experience and expertise.

Policy

1. This policy applies to all members of the PCC, the Standing Committee, and any other committees or working parties established by the PCC.
2. A conflict of interest is any situation in which a member's personal interests or loyalties could prevent, or could appear to prevent, the member from making a decision solely in the best interests of the PCC. Such a situation may arise:
    a. where there is a potential financial benefit to a member, either directly or indirectly through a connected person, such as a close family member or business partner; or
    b. where a member's duty to the PCC may conflict with a duty of loyalty owed to another organisation or person, for example because the member is also a trustee or committee member of another body with an interest in the matter.
3. Members should declare any conflicts of interest to the Chair as soon as the agenda is circulated. They must also declare the conflict at the meeting when the relevant agenda item is reached.
4. Subject to paragraph 6, where a conflict of interest involves a personal benefit, the member concerned must withdraw from the meeting and must not take part in any related discussion. This includes discussion about obtaining any Charity Commission authority required to authorise the benefit. See the *Guidance Note: PCC members and private benefit*.
5. Subject to paragraph 6, where a conflict of loyalty arises, the PCC will decide what level of participation, if any, is appropriate for the conflicted member, taking account of the duty to act in the PCC's best interests. The normal expectation is that the conflicted member will withdraw from the meeting while the relevant item is discussed.
6. A member does not need to withdraw from a meeting if their interest, whether financial or non-financial, is common to a class of people and is neither significant nor substantially greater than the interests of other members of that class.
7. The existence of a conflict of interest must be recorded in the minutes, together with the decision on how it was dealt with.

This policy was adopted by the PCC on 8th September 2026.