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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All select vestry members should be aware of the possibility of conflicts of interest, what they could mean for the parish and how they should be managed.

- Charity Name: ZION PARISH
- Date Adopted: 28th May 2026
- Minute Reference: Rector's Business

FOR INCLUSION IN AGENDA AND MINUTES:

"Any member of the Zion Parish, or a sub-committee thereof, who has (or whose family member or business partner has) a pecuniary or other material interest in any matter which is the subject of consideration at a meeting at which the member is present, shall declare an interest in the matter and withdraw from the meeting for the duration of discussions or decision making on the matter. No sub-committee of the Zion Parish shall, without the consent of the Zion Parish, resolve that the Zion Parish will enter into a contract with a member of the sub-committee or with any company of which that member is a partner, director or controlling shareholder provided that this shall not apply to any matter which is remote or insubstantial. Every declaration of interest shall be recorded in the minutes."

INTRODUCTION TO CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Members of the select vestry are under a duty to act in the best interests of the parish. This duty must take precedence over an individual's interests. A conflict of interest arises when the personal, family or business interests of a select vestry member seem to conflict with those of the parish they serve. This interest can be direct or indirect, and can include the interests of people or organisations connected to the member.

Conflicts of interest may inhibit free discussion at select vestry meetings, resulting in decisions or actions that are not in the best interests of the parish or risk the impression that the select vestry has acted improperly. The purpose of this guidance is to protect the parish and members of its select vestry from any appearance of impropriety.

DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

An example of a direct interest would be where a member stands to benefit financially from a decision by the select vestry to contract with a company which the member controls to provide services to the parish. An indirect interest would be if the member did not control the company but had shares in it and stood to benefit indirectly from any profit made, or if the owner's spouse controlled the company.

CONNECTED PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS

- Family members
- Corporate bodies to which the member is connected or is a beneficiary
- A business partner.

It is unlikely that conflicts of interest can be completely avoided but any potential conflict should be identified and managed to avoid any adverse effects on the parish and to promote maximum accountability and transparency in the work of the select vestry. Even potential or perceived conflicts should be considered in order to protect the integrity and reputation of the select vestry.

HOW TO DEAL WITH A CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Follow the steps below which set out declaring the interest, withdrawing from the meeting, deciding the impact of the interest and recording the decision.

STEP 1: DECLARE THE CONFLICT

Any select vestry member who has a potential or actual, financial or other interest in a matter under discussion should declare their interest at the earliest opportunity. Even where the interest creates a minimum risk of bias but might reasonably cause others to think it could influence that member's decisions, the nature of the interest should be declared.

If a member is in any doubt about whether they have a conflict of interest, they should consult with the chairperson.

If a member fails to declare an interest that is known to other members, another member may declare that interest at the meeting.

STEP 2: WITHDRAW FROM THE MEETING

Unless otherwise directed by the remaining members, the conflicted member should leave the meeting while the others decide on the impact of the interest and whether the conflicted member's absence is appropriate or necessary.

STEP 3: DECIDE ON THE IMPACT OF THE INTEREST

The remaining members should decide by a vote if the interest affects the conflicted member's ability to act in the best interests of the parish.

CONFLICT LEVEL	SUGGESTED ACTION
No conflict	Member can return to the meeting in their full capacity
Deemed low level conflict	Potential conflict may be tolerated if certain actions are taken to protect the parish interests, e.g. exclude the conflicted member's vote from relevant decisions
Serious conflict	A conflicted member should be excluded from the meeting and any decision making related to the conflict

MAKING DECISIONS WHERE THERE MAY BE A CONFLICT

- All decisions should be made by vote, with a simple majority required
- A quorum must be present for the discussion and decision
- Conflicted members should not be counted when deciding whether the meeting is quorate
- Conflicted members may not vote on matters deemed to affect their own personal interests

STEP 4: RECORDING THE DECISION

All decisions made about conflicts of interest and the matters concerned should be recorded in the minutes, noting the following:

- the member who has declared a conflict
- the nature and extent of the conflict
- a summary of the discussion
- the actions taken to manage the conflict

Best practice suggests that if a member shall receive personal benefit for any reason, even where the risk of a conflict of interest has been dismissed, this should be fully disclosed in the minutes.

KEEP A REGISTER OF CONNECTIONS AND INTERESTS

The Select Vestry must maintain a record of members' connections and interests in a register, noting the following:

- Name of member(s)
- The connection (familial, personal or business and whether current or past)
- The interest/connected person (e.g. Other member of Select Vestry, employee, or provider of goods/services to parish)
- Whether the interest is deemed by the select vestry to be a risk to the best interests of the parish

Parishes should also note any other charities on which members of the Select Vestry are trustees.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Confidential information provided by select vestry members in the course of dealing with a conflict of interest should be kept confidential by the select vestry and not be disclosed or used for any other purpose.

GIFTS & HOSPITALITY

Gifts and hospitality with nominal value may be accepted but only if gifts are not given or received with an expectation that an obligation is owed as a result of accepting the gift.

Gifts and hospitality intended to influence the select vestry's decision making should never be accepted.