

Woodland Corner

Conflicts of interest policy

Purpose

Committee members must make decisions based only on what is in the best interests of Woodland Corner. Personal interests, or the interests of people or organisations connected to Committee members must not influence their decisions.

What is a conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a Committee member's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent them from making a decision only in the best interests of Woodland Corner.

Conflicts of interest relate to the interests of the Committee member and/or those connected to them.

Examples of conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Selling, loaning or leasing charity assets to a Committee member
- Acquiring, borrowing or leasing assets from a Committee member
- Paying a Committee member, or a connected person, for providing a service to the charity
- Paying a Committee member, or a connected person, for providing goods to the charity.

Committee members must not use information obtained at Woodland Corner, in their capacity as a Committee member, for their own benefit or that of another organisation.

Committee members who are also parents of children attending Woodland Corner

Committee members are often parents of children who attend Woodland Corner. This presents a potential conflict of interest/loyalty. Committee members are aware that they are required to act in the best interests of Woodland Corner, and generally this conflict of loyalty is considered to be low risk. However, in certain circumstances the Chair may consider the risk of conflict to be increased and may decide that a Committee member should not participate in a particular decision: see Managing Conflicts below. This decision shall be made at the Chair's discretion.

Staff members who are members of the Committee or who attend Committee meetings

Occasionally a member of the management team or a staff member may also be a member of the Committee. Staff members must not vote on any decision relating to pay or staff benefits. Staff members attending a Committee meeting (including the Manager or Business Manager) may be asked to leave meetings where information which might be sensitive or which could give rise to a conflict of interest is to be discussed. This decision shall be made at the Chair's discretion.

Identifying conflicts of interest

1. Trustees have an individual personal responsibility to declare conflicts of interest which affect them. Committee members must inform the Chair of any professional or personal

interest which may make it hard for them to fulfil their duties impartially, or which may create an appearance of impropriety. They must do this:

- a. On appointment, and
 - b. Promptly, at any point when a conflict arises. Often this will be at the start of a Committee meeting in respect of a specific item on the agenda.
2. Conflicts of interest shall be a standing item on all Committee meeting agendas.

Managing conflicts of interest

3. The Committee must be able to demonstrate that their decision was made only in the best interests of Woodland Corner. How a conflict of interest is managed will depend on the specific circumstances. Options include:
- a. Removing the conflict of interest: this may mean not pursuing a certain course of action, or proceeding in a different way so that a conflict does not arise. If the conflict, or potential conflict is serious, it may mean securing the resignation of a trustee affected by a conflict of interest.
 - b. Requiring the affected Committee member to be absent from any part of the meeting where the issue giving rise to the conflict is discussed or decided.
 - c. Permitting the Committee member to stay in meetings where the decision is discussed and made, but not participate.

The decision on how to deal with a conflict shall be made by the Chair, at his/her discretion.

4. In managing conflicts of interest, the Committee must consider the need to protect Woodland Corner's reputation and they must be aware of the impression that their actions and decisions may have on those outside Woodland Corner.

Recording conflicts of interest

5. The Chair should keep a written record of any declared conflicts of interest.
6. The minutes of Committee meetings should record any conflicts and how these were managed. This should include: the nature of the conflict; which Committee member was affected; whether any conflicts of interest were declared in advance; whether anyone withdrew from the decision; how the Committee took the decision in the best interests of Woodland Corner.
7. The Treasurer and Business Manager must ensure that details of any payments or other benefits to Committee Members and/or connected persons are included in the annual accounts.