

Notes on the Revised Constitution

The revision of this constitution was primarily brought because the previous constitution, ratified in 2012, has proved unwieldy. It requires a full cohort of 19 members and, in reality, we have never achieved this number. This means being quorate is increasingly difficult, and it also means there is a large turnover of people, most of whom serve three-year terms, so around five or six new people join the Vestry each year (if we were able to fill the vacancies).

A charitable constitution is not descriptive - that is to say it is not an attempt to describe how the church operates, or a manifesto for how it should operate. It is there for several purposes:

- 1) to ensure that we observe charitable regulations
- 2) to ensure that we observe best practice as Christians in living out the Gospel
- 3) to ensure that the infrastructure of the church (ie the fabric, the finances, and the canonical requirements) are correctly attended to.

Having been at two churches where constitutions had been changed shortly before I arrived in post, and having been a part of the necessary revisions on that constitution, I have been very keen to ensure that this iteration of the constitution does not unnecessarily limit what future Vestries and Rectors may want to do, simply because we were being too detailed in what we wanted to do in the present.

For instance, the model constitution, adopted or adapted by almost every church in the SEC, says that the Vestry shall meet at least twice a year. This does not mean the Vestry cannot meet monthly, or weekly, if it wants! It is to ensure that there is enough oversight without making other ways of doing business impossible.

All that is by way of saying that the constitution does not describe what we do as a church, but rather give guardrails which prevent the church slipping into behaviour which is either uncanonical, below the expectation of OSCR (Scottish charity regulator), or which may damage the fabric or finance or governance

The major changes to the previous constitution are:

- 1) To reduce the number of Vestry members from 19 down to between 12 and 14
- 2) To increase term times for Vestry members so that they may remain in post for a total of six years.
- 3) To combine, or potentially combine, the roles of People's Warden, Lay Representative and Area Council member
- 4) To elect an Alternative Lay Representative from the Vestry members rather than having that post as an ex officio post.

The only amendment I have made since the Vestry approved this in late 2019 is to suggest a removal of part of 8 (f), as it is a duplicate of 8 (d).

If we approve the constitution, or an amended version of it in Vestry, the next stage is to hold two congregational meetings. At the first the new constitution needs to be approved by a 2/3rds majority. At the second, held within three months of the first, it needs to be a simple majority. Then it can be sent to the Bishop for approval.

The Rector
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