

Warwick Unitarians

Trustees' Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

The Warwick Unitarians Trustees are expected to conduct themselves with absolute professionalism and to act in the charity's best interests. Trustees are asked to sign this code of conduct upon election or appointment to the Board of Trustees, which lays out what is expected of them, and the potential consequences of any serious breach of this code.

This Trustees' Code of Conduct sets out the standards and behaviours, in no order of priority, expected by the Warwick Unitarians Board of Trustees (individually and collectively) when acting on behalf of, or representing, the charity. It is not a list of Trustees' legal duties.

The Board of Trustees is determined to ensure the organisation inspires confidence and trust amongst its members, volunteers and the general public. It will do this by demonstrating individual and collective integrity and avoiding any potential or real situations of undue bias or influence in the decision-making of the charity and in its dealings.

2. Standards of Conduct

Trustees are required to adhere to the highest standards of conduct in the performance of their duties. This code of conduct respects and endorses the principles of good governance in the Charity Governance Code 2017, and incorporates the 7 principles of public life (the 'Nolan Principles'):

- i. Selflessness
- ii. Integrity
- iii. Objectivity
- iv. Accountability
- v. Openness
- vi. Honesty
- vii. Leadership.

As a Trustee of Warwick Unitarians, I promise to:

Focus

- ensure that everything the charity does helps (or is intended to help) to achieve the purposes for which it is set up, and no other purpose;
- uphold and support the charity's agreed mission, vision, strategy, policies and plans, and keep myself informed about the charity's work and the external environment.

Be accountable

- seek to inform myself about the views of stakeholders including other trustees, members, volunteers and members of the public, and to consider them when making decisions;

- understand that it is not my responsibility to represent the interests or views of any particular stakeholder group at Board but that my duty is to the charity as a whole and its beneficiaries;
- hold myself accountable to the charity's beneficiaries, to my fellow Trustees, to the members of the charity, to regulatory authorities, and to the public.

Comply

- uphold and comply with the charity's governing documents, this Code and the Trustees' Conflict of Interest Policy;
- take ultimate responsibility for safeguarding the charity's beneficiaries and ensure appropriate safeguarding processes, policies and procedures are in place;
- comply with and uphold the Charity's Data Protection policy.

Understand

- be aware of, understand, and comply with my legal duties and responsibilities as a charity Trustee;
- research or seek advice from suitable professionals if any aspect of my legal obligation is unclear;

Take advice

- apply any relevant expertise and experience I have, including professional expertise, to the decision-making process;
- ensure that appropriate professional, legal, reputational, regulatory and financial advice is obtained where necessary and followed unless Trustees are able to put forward clear and justifiable reasons not to do so;
- understand that not to follow clear professional advice places the charity at risk of intense scrutiny and potential loss of reputation if the reasons for not doing so do not hold true.

Manage conflicts

- act with integrity and honesty and at all times in the best interests of the charity as a whole, avoiding situations where any personal, family or professional interests or loyalties may conflict with those of the charity or have undue influence over my decision making;
- declare a conflict of interest or loyalty, and where appropriate to opt out of decisions that will affect myself, a family member, close friend or professional associate directly;
- always place the best interests of the charity above any personal, family or professional interests or loyalties.

Accept collective responsibility

- accept collective responsibility for all areas of the Board of Trustees' work and inform myself about issues which are unfamiliar to me, in the clear understanding that there is no such thing as a 'single issue Trustee';

- engage fully and constructively in collective decision-making of the Board of Trustees, asking questions and expressing any reservations or disagreement openly and honestly;
- understand that whilst I am entitled to abstain from voting, or to have my opposition to a decision recorded formally, as a Trustee I am still bound by collective responsibility even for a Board decision with which I do not agree, or from which I was absent;
- respect, support and carry out decisions made collectively or by Board majority, and to consider resigning if I am not prepared to accept collective responsibility for such a decision.

Promote a positive Board culture

- seek to promote a Board culture which is open, inclusive and respectful of diversity in all of its forms;
- work constructively and respectfully with fellow Trustees, members and volunteers, and others within the charity;
- never allow personal differences to undermine the charity's progress, and never to encourage or engage in factional disputes or internal politicking which impedes the work of Board, collective decision-making or responsibility;
- respect and support the leadership roles of the Chair and any other members and volunteers having responsibility for any aspect of the charity's work;
- privately speak to the Chair, in the first instance, if I am unsure or concerned about any aspect of my role, the work of the Board or charity.

Respect confidentiality

- respect confidentiality on any matter, even after leaving the office of trustee, and to respect and never undermine planned communications;
- understand that Board confidentiality should not restrict genuine whistle blowing, with respect to which any concerns should be reported to the relevant authority only after all internal avenues have been exhausted.

Maintain appropriate boundaries

- maintain clear and appropriate boundaries between my Trustee role and any other roles I have within the Unitarians, recognising the potential for conflict of interest or loyalty;
- understand that I am accountable to the relevant organising person when acting as a volunteer at an event.

Uphold our reputation

- uphold the public reputation of Warwick Unitarians and the Unitarian Movement;
- to conduct myself in public and in public forums (including any personal social media accounts) in such a way as to uphold Warwick Unitarians and the Board of Trustees' good reputation, even after leaving the office of trustee, and especially with regard to matters that may reasonably be deemed contentious or having been discussed in closed session.

Commit to my own learning and development

- seek guidance and help in my role as a Trustee if I feel I need it or in response to feedback, and participate in processes to review and evaluate Board and Trustee performance;

Be clear about my commitment

- contribute fully and actively to the work of the Board of Trustees. At a minimum this means making every endeavour to prepare for and attend meetings of the full Board, read Board papers, take part in any decisions outside of Board meetings, and participate in induction, training and development activities for Trustees;
- strive to serve my full term of office but also to consider resigning if I can no longer commit the time and resources that the role requires.

Actively support this Code of Conduct

- Should I believe that a Trustee is, or that multiple Trustees are, acting inappropriately or in breach of this code of conduct, I will instigate (anonymously via the Chair) an investigation as is outlined below;
- I will respect and uphold the Board's final decision following a hearing and consideration of all available evidence.

Breaches of this code

- Any suspected substantial breaches of this code shall be considered in the first instance by the Chair, who, together with two Trustees will decide whether the suspected breach is serious enough to warrant investigation;
- Investigation will be led by the Chair plus two Trustees: one appointed and one elected, nominated by the Board of Trustees by majority vote of those not conflicted;
- A report on the findings of the investigation, along with any recommendations, will be brought to a closed session of the Board of Trustees;
- Possible sanctions available to the Board include, but are not limited to, the following actions, which are listed in no particular order:
 - requirement for the Trustee in question to undertake relevant and appropriate training
 - removal of office within the Board of Trustees
 - formal disciplinary letter recorded
 - temporary suspension from the Board pending further investigation
 - request to resign as a Trustee of the charity
 - removal of membership
- If a majority of Trustees are not content that an internal investigation has been, or can be, suitably impartial, they may commission an independent complaint review.

3. Expenses

- All Trustees and volunteers are entitled to reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses which they legitimately incur while promoting and supporting the delivery of the charity's objectives.

- These policies and procedures are based on the Charity Commissioners guidance on reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses incurred by Trustees as in its publication "Trustee Expenses and Payments" (CC11) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trustee-expenses-and-payments-cc11/trustee-expenses-and-payments>
- Warwick Unitarians reserves the right to change its expenses policies and procedures to maintain consistency with current accepted best practice, and otherwise to meet the needs of the charity.


Trustee expenses reclaimable

- Underlying this guidance is the need for Trustees to be conscious of the proper use of charity funds and of maximising value for money in the way they travel and the accommodation used.
- In all cases, it is important to ensure that the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses is not – or does not appear to be – a disguise for making income payments (remuneration) to the recipient(s).
- Expenses may only be incurred and subsequently reimbursed by the charity in respect of activities which are part of the charity's agreed programme of charitable activities (i.e. prior agreement with the Chair of the Board of Trustees).
- Trustees may be refunded for the following expenditure incurred in the course of carrying out charity business;
 - Printer, Postage and Stationery Costs
 - Travel and Parking costs
 - Other out of pocket expenses

Declaration

I understand that substantial breach of any part of this code may result in sanctions being brought against me, including being asked to resign from the Board of Trustees or, in extremis, removal of my Warwick Unitarians membership that will render me ineligible to serve on the Board.

Should this happen I will be given the opportunity to be heard. I will respect the Board's final decision by majority vote, following a hearing and consideration of all available evidence, on such a matter.

Signed 

NameDavid Healey.....

Date 11th April 2025.....

Adopted 11th April 2025

Last Review: -

Next Review April 2026