



'Committed to improving the life chances of all children, wherever they may be'

Conflicts of Interest Policy

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Statement of Intent

This policy sets out the framework for ensuring that the decisions and decision-making processes at the Orchard Community Trust are, and are seen to be, free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual or company connected with any of the Academies.

Trustees, Trustee/Governors and committee members of each Trust have an obligation to act in the best interests of the Trust and in accordance with its Articles of Association in order to avoid situations where there may be a potential conflict of interest.

Situations may arise where family interests or loyalties conflict with those of the Academies. They may create problems as they can inhibit free discussions, result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the Trust and risk the impression that the Trust has acted improperly.

The Orchard Community Trust therefore intends to:

- Ensure that every Trustee/Governor and trustee understands what constitutes a conflict of interest and that they have a responsibility to identify and declare any conflicts that might arise.
- Record the conflict and the actions taken to ensure that the conflict does not affect the decision-making of The Trust.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy takes its legal framework from the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Companies Act 2006.
- Conflicts of Interest: A Guide for Charity Trustees.

1.2. This policy must be read in conjunction with the following other policies:

- Finance Regulations and schemes of delegation
- Trustee/Governor Code of Conduct.

2. Definition

2.1. The Orchard Community Trust adopts the definition of the Charity Commission, which states that a conflict of interest is any situation where a Trustee/Governor's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen, to prevent the Trustee/Governor from making a decision in the best interests of the Trust.

3. Identifying conflicts of interest

3.1. The Orchard Community Trust expects individual Trustee/Governors and governing bodies to be able to identify any conflicts of interest at an early stage.

3.2. Individual Trustee/Governors fail to identify and declare any conflicts of interest will also fail to comply with their personal legal responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest and act only in the best interest of the Trust and its pupils.

3.3. The Trustees and governing bodies must ensure that any conflicts of interest do not prevent them from making a decision only in the best interests of the Trust and its pupils.

4. Articles of Association

4.1 The Trust's Articles of Association (para 97) state: Conflict of Interest

Any Director who has or can have any direct or indirect duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any Personal Financial Interest) which conflicts or may conflict with his duties as a Director shall disclose that fact to the Directors as soon as he becomes aware of it. A Director must absent himself from any discussions of the Directors in which it is possible that a conflict will arise between his duty to act solely in the interests of the Company and any duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any Personal Financial Interest).

5. Interests which should be declared

5.1. Trustees/Governors will be expected to declare the following interests:

- Holding another public office.
- Being an employee, director, advisor or partner of another business or organisation.
- Pursuing a business opportunity.
- Having a professional or legal obligation to someone else.
- Having a beneficial interest in a trust.
- Having received a gift, hospitality, or other benefit from someone / an organisation.
- Being a spouse, partner, relative or close friend of someone who has one of these interests.

6. Register of Interests

6.1. Trustees/Governors should keep an updated record of any conflicts of interest in the Trust's register of interests, which is maintained by the Clerk to the Trustees and kept in the Trust office.

7. Declaring Interests

7.1. Trustee/Governors should have a standard agenda item at the beginning of each meeting to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

7.2. A trustee/ Trustee/Governor should declare any interest which he / she has in an item to be discussed, at the earliest possible opportunity and before any discussion of the item itself.

7.3. If a Trustee/Governor is uncertain whether or not he / she is conflicted, he / she should declare the issue and discuss it with the other Trustee/Governors.

7.4. If a Trustee/Governor is aware of an undeclared conflict of interest affecting another Trustee/Governor, then he / she should notify the other Trustee/Governors or the Chair.

8. Removing Conflicts of Interest

8.1. Trustee/Governors must consider the conflict of interest so that any potential effect on decision-making is eliminated.

8.2. Trustee/Governors must follow any legal or governing document requirements on how a conflict of interest must be handled, but may, in serious cases, decide that removing the conflict of interest itself is the most effective way of preventing it from affecting their decision-making. Serious conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, those which:

8.2.1. Are so acute and extensive that the Trustee/Governors are unable to make their decisions in the best interest of the Trust and its pupils, or could be seen to be unable to do so.

8.2.2. Are present in significant or high risk decisions of the Trustee/Governors.

8.2.3. Mean that effective decision-making is regularly undermined or cannot be managed in accordance with the required or best practice approach.

8.2.4. Are associated with inappropriate Trustee/Governor benefit.

9. Withdrawing from Decision-Making

9.1. Where there is a proposed financial transaction between a Trustee/Governor and the Trust, or any transaction or arrangement involving Trustee/Governor benefit:

9.1.1. The benefit must be authorised in advance by the Audit & Resources Committee. If there is no Audit & Resources Committee meeting planned within the time frame of authorisation being required, then the Chair of the Audit & Resources Committee and one other finance Trustee/Governor can be contacted to authorise the benefit. If the person affected is the Chair of the Audit & Resources Committee then the Chair of the Trustees plus one other Audit & Resources Trustee/Governor must authorise the benefit.

9.1.2. The Trustees and governing body expects the affected Trustee/Governor to be absent from any part of any meeting where the issue is discussed or decided.

9.1.3. The affected individual should not vote or be counted in deciding whether a meeting is quorate.

9.2. Where there is a conflict of loyalty and the affected Trustee/Governor does not stand to gain any benefit and there are no specific governing document or legal provisions about how the conflict of loyalty should be handled, the affected Trustee/Governor should declare the interest.

9.3. The remainder of the governing body must then decide what level of participation, if any, is acceptable on the part of the conflicted Trustee/Governor. The options might include, but are not limited to, deciding whether the conflicted Trustee/Governor:

9.3.1. Having registered and fully declared the interest, can otherwise participate in the decision.

9.3.2. Can stay in the meetings where the decision is discussed and made, but not participate.

9.3.3. Should withdraw from the decision-making process in the way described above.

9.4. In deciding which course of action to take regarding a conflict of interest, Trustee/Governors:

9.4.1. Must always make their decisions only in the best interest of the Trust and its pupils.

9.4.2. Should always protect the Trust's reputation and be aware of the impression that their actions and decisions may have on those outside the Trust.

9.4.3. Should always be able to demonstrate that they have made decisions in the best interests of the Trust and its pupils, and independently of any competing interest.

9.4.4. Should require the withdrawal of the affected Trustee/Governor from any decisions where the Trustee/Governor's other interest is relevant to a high risk or controversial Trustee/Governor decision or could, or be seen to, significantly affect the Trustee/Governor's decision-making at the Trust.

9.4.5. Can allow a Trustee/Governor to participate where the existence of his / her other interest poses a low risk to decision-making in the Trust's interest or is likely to have only an insignificant bearing on his / her approach to an issue.

9.4.6. Should be aware that the presence of a conflicted Trustee/Governor can affect trust between Trustee/Governors, could inhibit free discussion, and might influence decision-making in some way.

9.5. Trustee/Governors can, before their discussion, ask a Trustee/Governor who is withdrawing, to provide any information necessary to help make the decision in the best interests of the Trust and its pupils.

10. Records of Proceedings

10.1. Trustee/Governors should record in the minutes, details of any and all discussions on potential conflicts of interests and the decisions made.

11. Confidentiality

11.1. Trustee/Governors cannot use information obtained at the Trust for their own benefit or that of another organisation if it has been obtained in confidence or has special value such as commercial sensitivity.

12. Monitoring and Enforcement

12.1. The Audit & Resources Committee of the Orchard Community Trust will carry out continuous monitoring of its activities and members to ensure that any conflicts of interest are identified and mitigated as soon as possible.

12.2. Trustee/Governors who fail to declare an interest and are found to be in conflict with the best interests of the Trust will be expected to explain to the Trustees his / her reasons for their omission.

12.3. Members may decide to terminate the membership of the relevant Trustee, if he / she is found to have knowingly and deliberately failed to declare an interest and has brought the Trust into disrepute.

13. Policy Circulation

13.1. This policy will be circulated to every Trustee/Governor and member of a committee, who shall annually sign a statement which affirms that he / she has:

- Received a copy of the policy.
- Has read and understood the policy.
- Has agreed to comply with the policy.

13.2. This policy will be included in the publication scheme on the Trust's website and will be made available to the public.

Appendix A

Annual Conflicts of Interest Acknowledgement Statement

In accordance with section 13.1 of the Conflicts of Interest Policy (“the Policy”), I, the undersigned Trustee/Governor with powers delegated by the governing body of The Orchard Community Trust hereby attests and affirms that I have:

1. Received a copy of the Policy.
2. Read and understood the Policy.
3. Agreed to comply with the Policy.

Print name :- _____

Signature: - _____

Dated: - _____