

THE NATIONAL STATUTES OF THE



ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY (ENGLAND & WALES)

PREFACE

The purpose of the International Rule is to provide a common framework within which we can work together to serve those in need, the Vincentian vocation to which Christ calls us. The Rule is commended to Members as a source of guidance, inspiration and understanding of the ethos and aims of the Society.

As an international lay organisation, Catholic in character and origin, we have International Statutes, on which the National Statutes for each country must be based, subject to the laws of the country in which the Society exists. The Purpose of the Statutes is not only to enable the Society to function effectively, but also to protect the interests of those we seek to serve and of the Members themselves, by demonstrating that we operate within the law and with proper authority.

In addition, as a registered Charity and Company, the Society in England and Wales must have governing Articles of Association.

The National Statutes provide the basic framework for the governance and operation of the Society, but they do not describe the detailed management of the Society's affairs. This is covered in relevant Policies and Procedures, which should be treated as a part of the Rule.

Guidance on the appropriate interpretation and application of the Rule and Internal Statutes is set out in a separate document. This does not constitute part of the Rule and National Statutes, but is intended to assist officers and members to deal sensibly with a range of circumstances.

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1. THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SOCIETY IN ENGLAND & WALES

Statutory Framework

- 1.1 The Society is constituted under the Laws of England & Wales as a company limited by guarantee (Company Number: 3174679). The Society is also a Charity registered with the Charity Commission (Charity Number: 1053992). The governing document of the Society is the Articles of Association of the company.
- 1.2 Where there is a conflict between the Articles of Association of the Society and the National Statutes of the Society in England and Wales the Articles of Association will take precedence over the National Statutes of the Society.
- 1.3 The Society in England and Wales will ensure that the Articles of Association of the Society will comply with the International Statutes of the Society insofar as those Statutes do not conflict with the Laws of England and Wales.
- 1.4 Where there is a conflict between the Laws of England and Wales and the International Statutes of the Society then the Laws of England and Wales will take precedence over the International Statutes but only in relation to the Society in England and Wales.
- 1.5 Where there is a conflict between the International Rule of the Society and the National Statutes of the Society in England and Wales the International Rule of the Society will take precedence over the Rule of the Society.
- 1.6 These National statutes of England & Wales received the approval of the Permanent Section of the Council-General on **9th June 2009**. They are subordinate to and interpreted according to “The Rule of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul” and to the International Statutes, in so far as these do not conflict with the laws of England & Wales, which shall take precedence in relation to the Society in England & Wales, and shall be treated together with them as a single document.

Accountability

- 1.7 Under Charity Law the Trustees are legally responsible for the Assets of the Society and for everything done in the name of the Society. The Trustees, after consulting with National Council, decide the Policies of the Society.
- 1.8 Members, Conferences, Councils, Special Works and Boards are required to observe the approved Policies and Procedures of the Society.
- 1.9 The broadcasting or publication of any literature or article issued in the name of the Society shall be in accordance with guidelines issued by the Trustees acting with the delegated authority of the National President.
- 1.10 Any records, accounts, or official correspondence held by any Conference, Council or Special Works, shall be made available, on request, to the relevant Council Officers or to the Trustees.
- 1.11 The Society embraces the principle of subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation, to ensure that the local environment and circumstances are properly taken into

account, wherever possible, but always subject to compliance with the laws of England & Wales, the policies of the Society and the jurisdiction of the Trustees.

- 1.12 The Society accepts the principle of democratic consensus as basic to its functioning.
- 1.13 Leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the members, and the poor. Servant leaders imitate Jesus, who said: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:45)
- 1.14 It is recommended that none of the principal officers of a Conference, Council or Board should be a relative of the President.
- 1.15 The Chief Executive Officer of the Society is responsible to the National President for the day to day running of the Society. The Chief Executive Officer is a non-voting member of the National Board.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY

- 2.1 The National Council shall establish a structure of Central and District Councils with responsibilities for defined geographic areas to ensure effective coordination of Society activity and the development of its mission. Councils shall include in their title the name of the area they serve, to distinguish between them. The formal institution of these Councils must be endorsed by the International Council-General. The structure of the Society is:

Board of Trustees	Legally accountable for the activity of the Society in England and Wales Appointed by the National President and approved by the National Council.
National Council	The corporate body of the Society under the Articles of Association of the Society. The National representative body comprises of the Presidents of the Central Councils, Trustees and the National Honorary Officers.
Central Councils	Based mainly on the Dioceses of England & Wales . The bodies responsible for promoting the work of the Society within a particular region comprised primarily of the District Presidents within the Central Council area.
District Councils	Based mainly on Deaneries, or pastoral areas in England & Wales. The bodies responsible for promoting the work of the Society in a particular locality. Comprised of the Presidents of the Conferences within the locality and honorary officers.

Conferences
The primary membership unit, mainly Parish based, but may be adapted to other circumstances e.g. hospitals, schools & Special Works.

Special Works/Community Support Projects

Projects organised to provide a particular service(s) to a defined group or in response to an identified need and which are wholly the responsibility of the Society.

Young Vincentians (i.e. Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP, SVP B-Attitude & SVP 1833)

Any Conferences, Councils or projects established specifically to promote the involvement of younger persons shall be accountable to the Council under which they operate in the same way as any other Conference or Council.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Membership is open to all Christians who share the spirit of the Society, who sincerely accept its principles, and who have the will to commit themselves to active personal service in works of charity within the Society. Membership is open to members of other faiths who similarly share the spirit and principles of the Society and have the same will to commit themselves to active service in the Society.

3.2 Membership status may be conferred on anyone affiliated to a Conference, Council or Special Work and who is prepared, according to their circumstances, to undertake appropriate acts of personal service in works of charity within the Society, or otherwise to support the Society in its endeavours, and whose name has been registered following receipt of an approved application.

3.3 The obligations of FULL membership, having proper regard for personal and family circumstances, shall include:

- acceptance of the Rule and a willingness to abide by its spirit
- willingness to attend Conference and Festivals
- willingness to commit oneself to regular visits to those in need
- readiness to share in and support the activities of the Society
- willingness to support the Society financially, according to one's means
- acknowledgement of the need for ongoing personal and spiritual formation
- willingness to accept office in the Society, following appropriate training and development

3.4 Admission to membership shall be subject to the following process of enrolment:

- completion of a Form of Application

- interview by the Conference President or Chairman of a Special Work
 - the receipt of satisfactory references
 - obtaining a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS), formerly known as a CRB disclosure (Mandatory if visiting or having regular contact with children or vulnerable adults)
 - approval of the application by the Conference or Special Work Committee
- 3.5 The entitlement to visit or to have direct contact with any person in need in the name of the Society shall be restricted to those members who have satisfied the requirements listed in National Statute **3.4**. It shall be the responsibility of the President of the Conference or Council to ensure that any visit is undertaken in accordance with the Society's policy on safeguarding the welfare of those visited by members.
- 3.6 The Society may admit to auxiliary membership persons who wish to assist the Society, but who are unable to comply with all the obligations of full membership as defined in National statute **3.3**. In such cases, the process of enrolment set out in National Statute **3.4** shall be followed in full (*with the exception of 'obtaining a satisfactory DBS disclosure' for auxiliary members who do not visit*) and the provisions of National statute **3.5** shall apply.
- 3.7 The Society shall maintain a national Register of Members, comprising the particulars of any person who has satisfied the criteria for membership and whose application has been processed in accordance with any procedures approved by the National Council and Trustees.
- 3.8 The Register of Members shall, in addition to any relevant personal particulars, describe any limitations on activity as a member of the Society, which shall be communicated to the member at the time of admission to membership, or as and when there is a change in the member's circumstances.
- 3.9 When a new Conference is formed, the proposed founder members shall be subject to the same process of application and approval as set out in National Statutes **3.4**, except that the application shall be to the President of the District Council and approval shall be by that Council.
- 3.10 Apart from voluntary resignation, membership of the Society may be terminated only in accordance with the Adjudication and Reconciliation Committee procedures as approved by the Trustees and National Council in line with the International Statutes.

4. CONFERENCES

- 4.1 A full description of the responsibilities of Conferences and Conference Officers is given in the Procedures.

Status and Purpose

- 4.2 The primary membership unit of the Society shall be known as a Conference. Unless otherwise approved within guidelines issued by the National Council, all members shall be affiliated to a specified Conference.

- 4.3 A Conference of the Society may be established whenever the need for one becomes apparent. Parish Conferences should take the name of their Parish. All other Conferences will be known under a title approved by their District Council. The formal aggregation of a Conference by the International Council-General will signify incorporation into the International Society. An application for aggregation will normally be made 12 months after the foundation of a new Conference.
- 4.4 The purposes of a Conference shall be:
- to promote the work of the Society through the active personal involvement of the members in acts of charity for and on behalf of their neighbour in need, this service being in the spirit of Christ's love for the poor. No work of charity is foreign to the Society where Society members can be personally involved in offering appropriate help to anyone in need.
 - to encourage the spiritual development of the members.
 - to provide an effective link to the wider Society.
- 4.5 A Conference must act within the National Statutes in all matters, particularly those relating to finance and SVP Support. Treasurer's Returns and Secretarial Returns must be completed on a timely basis and submitted to National Office in accordance with the approved procedures.

Conference President

- 4.6 The Conference shall meet under the chairmanship of the President who is elected by secret ballot of the full members in accordance with National Statute **4.7**. The President should be Catholic but may, after consultation with the local Roman Catholic Bishop, be a member of a Church or ecclesial community which shares the Catholic beliefs in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven Sacraments and devotion to Mary. The President's term of office shall be a period of up to five years. The outgoing President shall not be eligible for re-election until a further three years have elapsed.

Election of Conference President

- 4.7 At least six weeks before the completion of the President's term of office, the Vice-President, or in his absence any member nominated by the President who will not be a candidate in the election, shall request nominations for his successor from the full members of the Conference, stipulating a closing date two weeks ahead. All nominations must have the consent of the member to be nominated.

Any full member of the Society is eligible for nomination, but only the full members of the Conference may submit nominations and vote. From the start of the nomination process the 'Veni Creator' ('Come Holy Spirit') or other suitable prayers should be said at the end of each meeting and privately.

At the next Conference meeting after the closing date for nominations, the nominees are to be announced, together with the date of the Conference meeting at which the election shall be held, which shall be at least two weeks prior to the termination of office. Absent members will be informed. At the election a secret ballot will be held.

Proxy votes from those who cannot attend may be handed in before the meeting. The votes will be counted by two people who are not candidates. The member receiving

the highest number of votes will be declared elected. In the event of an equality of votes, the outgoing President will have the casting vote. The election of the new President must be reported to the next higher Council and to National Office.

Appointment of Conference Officers

- 4.8 After consultation with the Members, the President shall appoint a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer who shall retire at the end of the President's term of office. The appointment of any officer shall be reported to the next higher Council and to National Office.
- 4.9 In the absence of the President, the Vice-President assumes all the powers and duties of the President.

Responsibilities of Conference Officers

- 4.10 The President shall promote the Vincentian spirituality of the Conference, direct its work, and attend all meetings of its District Council.
- 4.11 The Secretary shall prepare the Minutes of the Conference Meetings and shall maintain:
- A Register of Members with names, addresses, email and telephone numbers and the enhanced DBS or CRB Certificate Number.
 - A record of the names and addresses of the families and persons under the care of the Conference, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- 4.12 The Secretary will prepare the Conference annual membership and activity return and promptly inform the District Council and National Office of any change in membership details or of Conference officers, in accordance with agreed timescales.
- 4.13 The Treasurer shall keep the Conference financial records and accounts, submit quarterly and annual financial returns, and remit SVP Support payments to National Office in line with the approved procedures.
- 4.14 The Treasurer and the Conference shall comply with Standing Financial Procedures as approved by the Trustees.

Conference Spiritual Adviser

- 4.15 A Conference should have a Spiritual Adviser, who must be a Catholic. The Conference President is responsible for agreeing with the Parish Priest or Chaplain who should be the Spiritual Adviser. In the absence of a priest, a parish Deacon or Religious should be invited to become the Spiritual Adviser. If there is no such person available, a member of the Conference, who has or is prepared to participate in the Society's Course for Spiritual Advisers, may be appointed Spiritual Adviser.
- 4.16 Priests, Deacons and members of Religious Orders are Members of Honour in the Society and are not eligible to hold any office, other than as Spiritual Adviser, as the Society is an International Lay Organisation.

Conference Meetings

- 4.17 Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least fortnightly, at a place, time and day determined by the Conference members.

- 4.18 Conference and all Society meetings commence and end with prayers. A spiritual reading or meditation, on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding, is to be regarded as an essential part of the Meeting.
- 4.19 The order of business and the conduct of the meeting shall be at the discretion of the President, having proper regard to the guidance set out in the Procedures. A sufficient confidential record of the proceedings must be made and retained, such record to include details of any financial transactions and a succinct summary of visits made by members.

Visits by Members

- 4.20 The term "visit" is used to signify a direct contact by a full or auxiliary member of the Society with a person in need, whether in their own home or in other appropriate circumstances.
- 4.21 Allocation of the visits and other tasks entrusted to each full or auxiliary member is to be made by the President, after consultation with the Conference. The circumstances of those to be visited must be taken into account and relevant risks assessed and recorded. Visits may be made only by members who have had a satisfactory DBS or CRB disclosure and should be made in pairs, unless the President is satisfied that the circumstances pose no risk to the good name of the member or the Society.
- 4.22 Visits to those in need should be made in their environment, whenever possible. The contact with those in need should always be made in a spirit of friendship, respect, cordiality, empathy and affection. It should also promote self-sufficiency whenever possible for those who are suffering or in need, and show concern for their deepest needs.

Other Conference Activity

- 4.23 Conferences shall be free to organise other suitable activities, such as outings or social events, provided that the Society's Health and Safety Policy is observed in order to identify and mitigate any risks to the persons involved.

Conference Finances

- 4.24 The principal sources of funds for the Conference shall be:
- the contributions of the members
 - donations received through appeals and collections authorised by the Parish Priest
 - fundraising activities
- 4.25 The contributions of members shall be determined by the individual member, who shall be encouraged to donate a meaningful regular amount, having regard to their own circumstances, towards the sums available for distribution to those in need and to support the activity and administration of the wider Society, nationally and internationally.
- 4.26 Members shall not be required to disclose the amount of any personal donation. A secret collection shall be taken and members will be encouraged to Gift Aid their donation thereby increasing the funds available to the Society at no extra cost to themselves.
- 4.27 All Conference accounts shall be examined annually in accordance with the Society's auditing requirements.

- 4.28 The Conference should expend its funds only for the benefit of families and persons under the care of the Society and its Special Works. A Conference cannot donate funds to other Charities or Special Activities without the advance written authority of the Trustees.

Review and Renewal

- 4.29 At least once a year, the Conference members should evaluate the range and quality of their activities and their service to the poor they visit, and find ways to provide better service. They should also consider any new types of need identified and how to find those in need of assistance and support.
- 4.30 Conferences are encouraged to publicise to their Church parishioners their Annual Report, including a Statement of their income and expenditure, but not so as to identify individuals or families whom they have helped.
- 4.31 All members shall annually renew their promise of service to the Society and to the poor, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their vocation.
- 4.32 The Conference should have two Masses offered annually, one on the Anniversary of the establishment of the Conference (if known), for the members, their families and the people visited and helped during the year. The second Mass should be offered in November for the deceased members of the Conference and for those whom the Conference helped over the years and who are now at rest.

Suspension or Closure

- 4.33 The suspension or closure of a Conference or its officers may be determined by the District or higher Council only in accordance with the Adjudication and Reconciliation Procedures as approved by the Trustees and National Council in line with the International Statutes.
- 4.34 If the number of active members or the lack of officers means that a Conference is unable to function effectively, the Conference will be put into a state of abeyance and the members shall be invited to become affiliated to or merge with a neighbouring Conference.
- 4.35 When a Conference goes into abeyance or ceases to be part of the Society, all funds of the Conference must be transferred to the District Council, together with the Minute and Account Books and any associated records.

5. DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 5.1 A full description of the responsibilities of District Councils and District Council Officers is given in the Procedures.

Status and Purpose

- 5.2 The District Council is responsible for the development of the Society's mission in a defined locality by:
- fostering growth and renewal of Conferences
 - co-ordinating the activities of Conferences and local Special Works and by organising common projects, when appropriate

- being at the service of local Conferences in helping them to serve the poor effectively or to fulfil their obligations to the Society
- ensuring that Conferences comply with the National Statutes and procedures
- maintaining effective communication to and from higher Councils

Membership of District Council

5.3 Voting members of the District Council are the Presidents of all Parish, SVP 1833 and Special Works' Conferences within its jurisdiction, together with the following officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

5.4 After consultation with the Council, the President may co-opt to membership the Chairmen of Special Works within the jurisdiction of the Council, and any member with qualities he deems to be of advantage to the Council. Co-opted members shall be non-voting and the number of such members shall not exceed the number of voting members.

District Council President

5.5 The District Council shall meet under the chairmanship of the President, who shall be elected by the voting members of the District Council, by secret ballot in accordance with National Statute 5.6. The President should be Catholic but may, after consultation with the local Roman Catholic Bishop, be a member of a Church or ecclesial community which shares the Catholic beliefs in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven Sacraments, and devotion to Mary. The President's term of office shall be for a period of up to five years. The outgoing President shall not be eligible for re-election until a further three years have elapsed.

Election of District Council President

5.6 At least four months before the date of a President's retirement, the Vice-President, or in his absence any member nominated by the President who will not be a candidate in the election, shall request nominations for his successor, stipulating a closing date at least two months before the current President's retirement. All nominations must have the consent of the member to be nominated.

5.6.1 Any full member of the Society is eligible for nomination, but only the elected members of the Council (i.e. Conference presidents) and the current President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) may submit nominations and vote.

5.6.2 From the start of the nomination process the 'Veni Creator' ('Come Holy Spirit') or other suitable prayers should be recited at every Society meeting throughout the Council area for guidance and for the President-to-be.

5.6.3 At the following meeting of the Council, or previously by post, the Vice-President will announce the nominations. Nominees should provide a brief note of their Vincentian experience and any relevant skills, and outline their future priorities for the Society. Prayers continue for the member to be elected. The election may be by a secret ballot at a meeting, or by a postal ballot. The votes will be counted by two people who are not candidates. The member securing the highest number of votes will be declared elected. In the case of equality of votes, the outgoing President will have the casting vote.

- 5.6.4 The appointment of a new President shall be reported to the President of the next higher Council and to National Office, for information.

District Council Officers and Board

- 5.7 After consultation with the Council Members, the President shall appoint a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer who shall retire at the end of the President's term in office.
- 5.8 In the absence of the President, the Vice-President assumes all the powers and duties of the President.
- 5.9 The District Council President may be assisted by a Board of members nominated by him and approved by the elected members of the District Council. The majority of the Board shall be voting members of the Council. The members of the Board retire with the President at the expiration of his term in office.

Responsibilities of District Council Officers

- 5.10 The President shall promote the Vincentian spirituality of the Council, direct its work, attend all meetings of the Central Council, and ensure that full and effective communication both to and from the Central Council is maintained.
- 5.11 The District President should submit a written Annual Report to Central Council to include an income and expenditure account plus balance sheet, or a copy of the District Council Bank Statements, as an account of his stewardship of the District Council.

District Council Spiritual Adviser

- 5.12 District Councils should have a Spiritual Adviser, who must be a Catholic. The District Council President should invite a Priest, Chaplain, Deacon or Religious to undertake this role.

Meetings of District Council

- 5.13 District Councils shall meet at least once a quarter.
- 5.14 District Council meetings commence and end with prayers. A spiritual reading or meditation, on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding, is to be regarded as an essential part of the Meeting.
- 5.15 The order of business and the conduct of the meeting shall be at the discretion of the President, having proper regard to the guidance set out in the Procedures. A sufficient confidential record of the proceedings must be made and retained, such record to include details of any financial transactions and activities.

Festival Meetings

- 5.16 At least two Festival Meetings a year shall be observed, preferably on, or near to, the following dates:
- the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8th December),
 - the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul (27th September),
 - the First Sunday of Lent (mid-February to mid-March),

- the Birthday of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam (23rd April), or his Feast Day (9th September).

Finances of District Councils

- 5.17 The principal sources of funds of District Councils shall be:
- the proportion of Society Support payments approved by the Central Council
 - fund raising activity organised by the Council
- 5.18 At least once a year, District Councils should evaluate the range and quality of their activities and their service to Members, and to the poor who are visited, and find ways to provide better service, including through Special Works. They should also consider any new types of need identified and how to find those in need of assistance and support.

6. CENTRAL COUNCILS

- 6.1 A full description of the responsibilities of Central Councils and Central Council Officers is given in the Procedures.

Status and Purpose

- 6.2 The Central Council is responsible for fostering the growth of the Society in the region by:
- communicating the Society's objectives and values both to members and to the outside world
 - coordinating all activities of the Society within its area

Membership of Central Council

- 6.3 Voting members of the Central Council are the Presidents of all District Councils within its jurisdiction and the following officers: Central Council President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Central Council President

- 6.4 The Central Council shall meet under the chairmanship of the President, who shall be elected by the voting members of the Central Council, by secret ballot in accordance with National Statute **6.5**. The President should be Catholic but may, after consultation with the local Roman Catholic Bishop, be a member of a Church or ecclesial community which shares the Catholic beliefs in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven Sacraments and devotion to Mary. The President's term of office shall be for a period of up to five years. The outgoing President shall not be eligible for re-election until a further three years have elapsed.

Election of Central Council President

- 6.5 At least four months before the date of a President's retirement, the Vice-President, or in his absence any member nominated by the President who will not be a candidate in the election, shall request nominations for his successor, stipulating a closing date at least two months before the current President's retirement. All nominations must have the consent of the member to be nominated.

- 6.5.1 Any full member of the Society is eligible for nomination, but only the elected members of the Council (i.e. DC Presidents) and the current President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer may submit nominations and vote.
- 6.5.2 From the start of the nomination process the 'Veni Creator' ('Come Holy Spirit') or other suitable prayers should be recited at every Society meeting throughout the Council area for guidance and for the President-to-be.
- 6.5.3 At the following meeting of the Council, or previously by post, the Vice-President will announce the nominations. Nominees should provide a brief note of their Vincentian experience and any relevant skills, and outline their future priorities for the Society. Prayers continue for the member to be elected. The election may be by a secret ballot at a meeting, or by a postal ballot. The votes will be counted by two people who are not candidates. The member securing the highest number of votes will be declared elected. In the case of equality of votes, the outgoing President will have the casting vote.
- 6.5.4 The appointment of a new President shall be reported to the President of the next higher Council and to National Office, for information, and the Diocesan Bishop should also be notified.

Central Council Officers and Board

- 6.6 After consultation with the Council Members, the President shall appoint a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer who shall retire at the end of the President's term of office.
- 6.7 In the absence of the President, the Vice-President assumes all the powers and duties of the President.
- 6.8 The President shall co-opt to membership a Twinnage and a Young Vincentian Representative, and after agreement with the Council may co-opt the Chairmen of Special Works and any member with qualities he deems to be of advantage to the Council. Co-opted members shall be non-voting and the number of such members shall not exceed the number of voting members.
- 6.9 The Central Council President may be assisted by a Board of members nominated by him and approved by the elected members of the Central Council. The majority of the Board shall be voting members of the Council. The members of the Board retire with the President at the expiration of his term in office.
- 6.10 The Central Council President is encouraged to appoint to the Board an SVP 1833 and a Young Vincentian member of the Society who will have the right to attend Board Meetings and to speak and vote on issues affecting the Youth SVP in the Central Council area.

Responsibilities of Central Council Officers

- 6.11 The President shall represent the Society in the area of his Council's jurisdiction before the Bishop, National Council, Local Authority, Ecumenical and Social Welfare Groups.

6.12 The President shall promote the Vincentian spirituality of the Council, direct its work and attend all meetings of the National Council. He should bring back to his Central Council a faithful account of the proceedings of National Council.

6.13 Central Councils are encouraged to prepare Annual Reports to include a full financial statement for publication to the members, the Bishop of the Diocese, National Council and external bodies such as Local Authorities and Funding Organisations.

Central Council Spiritual Adviser

6.14 Central Councils should have a Spiritual Adviser, who must be a Catholic. The Central Council President should invite a Priest, Chaplain, Deacon or Religious to undertake this role.

Central Council Meetings

6.15 Central Councils shall meet at least once a quarter.

6.16 Central Council meetings commence and end with prayers. A spiritual reading or meditation, on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding, is to be regarded as an essential part of the Meeting.

6.17 The order of business and the conduct of the meeting shall be at the discretion of the President, having proper regard to the guidance set out in the Procedures. A sufficient confidential record of the proceedings must be made and retained, such record to include details of any financial transactions and activities.

6.18 A copy of the Minutes of Central Council Meetings must be sent to National Office for the Trustees of the Society.

6.19 At least once a year, Central Councils should evaluate the range and quality of their activities and their service to Members, and to the poor who are visited, and find ways to provide better service, including through Special Works. They should also consider any new types of need identified and how to find those in need of assistance and support.

7. NATIONAL COUNCIL

Status and Purpose

7.1 The National Council is responsible for:

- maintaining the ethos and principles of the Society in England and Wales
- the election of the National President and approving the members of the Board of Trustees appointed by the National President
- the discharge of any other functions and responsibilities of the Corporate members, as defined in National Statute **7.2**, as may be described in the Articles of Association
- the scrutiny of policies or procedures proposed by the Trustees
- the consideration of any relevant matters raised by individual Central Council Presidents

Membership of the National Council

7.2 The National Council of the Society comprises:

- the National President,
- the Senior National Vice-President
- the National Treasurer
- the elected President of each Central Council

The persons listed above constitute the Corporate Members of the Society as defined in the Articles of Association.

- 7.3 The President shall co-opt to membership a Twinnage and a Young Vincentian Representative and, after agreement with the Council, may co-opt the Chairpersons of Special Works within the jurisdiction of the National Council and any members with experience and qualities he deems to be of advantage to the Council. Co-opted members shall be non-voting and the number of such members shall not exceed the number of voting members.

National Council President

- 7.4 National Council shall meet under the Chairmanship of the President who is elected by a secret ballot of the Voting Members in accordance with National Statute **7.6**. The President should be Catholic but may, after consultation with the local Roman Catholic Bishop, be a member of a Church or ecclesial community which shares the Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven Sacraments and devotion to Mary.
- 7.5.1 The National President's term of office shall be a period of up to five years. The outgoing President shall not be eligible for re-election until a further five years have elapsed.
- 7.5.2 The National President shall be suspended from office pending the investigation into any allegations of serious civil or criminal misconduct. His term of Office shall be terminated immediately if he is charged with a Criminal or serious Civil Offence, or if he is unable to discharge his responsibilities as a result of physical or mental incapacity, as certified by a Medical Consultant appointed by The Trustees.
- 7.5.3 No National President may serve more than two terms in office, which must not be consecutive terms.

Election of National Council President

- 7.6 At least six months before the date of the National President's retirement, the National Vice-President, or in his absence any other National Council member appointed by the President who is not a candidate for election, will request nominations for his successor, stipulating a closing date at least four months before the current President's retirement. All nominations must have the consent of the member to be nominated.
- 7.6.1 Any full member of the Society, who has completed 10 years continuous full membership of the Society, preferably with experience of being a member of a Central Council, is eligible for nomination, but only the elected members of the

National Council and the current President, Vice-President and Treasurer may submit nominations and vote.

7.6.2 From the start of the nomination process the 'Veni Creator' ('Come Holy Spirit') or other suitable prayers should be recited at every Society meeting throughout England and Wales for guidance and for the President-to-be.

7.6.3 At the following meeting of the Council, or previously by post, the Vice-President will announce the nominations. Nominees should provide a brief note of their Vincentian experience and any relevant skills, and outline their future priorities for the Society. Prayers continue for the member to be elected. The election may be by a secret ballot or a postal ballot. The votes will be counted by two people who are not candidates. The member securing the highest number of votes will be declared elected, provided he has a majority of the votes cast. In the event of no one having a majority of the votes cast, the candidate with the least number of votes drops out and the election is re-run. This procedure continues until a candidate receives a simple majority of the votes cast. In the case of equality of votes, the election will be re-run with the two nominees who receive the most votes. In the event of another equality of votes, the Board of Trustees shall make the appointment from the two nominees by secret ballot.

National Council Officers and Board

7.7 The National President shall be assisted by a Board of Trustees of whom the President, Senior Vice-President, Treasurer and up to ten other members (as defined in paragraph 7.9 below) have power to vote at Board meetings.

7.8 The National Vice-President and Treasurer shall be nominated by the National President and approved (or elected by secret ballot if there is more than one nomination) by the voting members of the National Council.

7.9 On taking office, the National President will nominate up to five voting Board members, of whom at least three must be serving Central Council Presidents at the time of their appointment. One nominated Trustee may represent Young Vincentians. The remaining five, known as "Continuation Trustees", will be appointed (at least three from serving Central Council Presidents) half way through the President's Term of Office and will serve for a maximum of five years, until the half-way point of the next National President's term of office or as otherwise provided in the Articles of Association of the Society.

"The nomination of all Trustees, whether individually or collectively, must be approved by the voting members of National Council.

"The normal method of ascertaining the views of National Council will be by secret ballot, whether or not the number of candidates nominated by the National President exceeds the vacancies available."

7.10 The National President may co-opt to membership of the Board any member with experience and qualities he deems to be of advantage to the Board. Co-opted members shall be non-voting and the number of such members shall not exceed the number of voting members. The members of the Board, with the exception of the Continuation Trustees, will retire with the National President on the expiration of his term of office.

Responsibilities of National Council Officers

- 7.11 The duties and responsibilities of the President, Vice-President, and Treasurer are as described in the Procedures Manual.
- 7.12 The National President will represent the Society before the Hierarchy and Government Departments.
- 7.13 The National President is a member of the International Council-General.
- 7.14 The National President ensures that annual activity and audited financial reports are prepared, with summaries made available to Members and to the International Council-General, to the Bishops and, where appropriate, to other public bodies.

National Spiritual Adviser

- 7.15 The National Council should have a Spiritual Adviser, who must be Catholic. The National President should invite a Priest or Chaplain to undertake this role.

National Council Meetings

- 7.16 Voting Members of the National Council are the Presidents of all Central Councils and the following honorary officers: National President, National Vice-President and National Treasurer.

All Trustee Board members are invited to participate in National Council meetings with a right to speak, but only those who are currently CC Presidents, plus the honorary officers as defined above have the right to vote.

- 7.17 The Articles of Association of the Society contain the provisions relating to the voting arrangements at National Council Meetings including the number of members required to form a Quorum and the number of votes required to pass Ordinary or Special Resolutions.
- 7.18 Central Council Presidents serve as the elected representative of their Central Council, they are not the “delegates” of their Central Council.
- 7.19 Central Council Presidents may raise issues at National Council which affect their area.
- 7.20 Subject to the National Council voting otherwise, any issue requiring consultation with National Council, or a decision by National Council, shall be notified to all National Council members at least fourteen days prior to the meeting, in sufficient detail to enable informed discussion of the subject matter to take place, and a decision made, when required.

8. SPECIAL WORKS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROJECTS

- 8.1 A full description of the rules governing the establishment, operation and accountabilities of Special Works and Community Support Projects is given in the Procedures.
- 8.2 Works of charity which provide a particular service(s), whether to a defined group or in response to an identified need, on a regular or periodic basis, and which correspond to

criteria approved by the Trustees, may be designated as Special Works or Community Support Projects.

- 8.3 The term Special Work shall be applied where the service or activity is directly supervised or managed by a Conference or Council, and the activity is organised and provided entirely by members and/or volunteers.
- 8.4 The term Community Support Project shall be applied where the service or activity includes the employment of staff under a contract of employment, as required by law, or any undertaking by the Society as part of a contract for services.
- 8.5 Special Works shall be run by a specially constituted Conference, or by a Committee or Board, of which the Chairperson shall be an active member of the Society, and the majority of the voting members shall be Society members. All Special Works meetings commence and end with prayers.
- 8.6 The election of the President of a Special Works Conference shall be in accordance with the procedures set out in National Statute **4.7**.
- 8.7 The Chairman of a Committee or Board is appointed by the Central Council President for the area in which the Community Support Project is located, subject to approval by the National President.
- 8.8 The Chairman and members of Community Support Projects managed on behalf of the Trustees shall be appointed by the Trustees, in consultation with the relevant Central Council President and national senior management.
- 8.9 The Trustees of the Society, after consultation with National Council and the Chairpersons of Special Works and Community Support Projects, may determine a standard Constitution and Mission Statement for Special Works and Community Support Projects.
- 8.10 The Trustees of the Society shall be entitled, after due consultation with National Council and evaluation of the legal consequences, to replace the members of the Management Committee of any Special Work or Community Support Project and any of its employees regardless of their functions, where the circumstances so warrant in order to preserve the good name of the Society, compliance with statutory requirements, or other grave reason. The Trustees shall be obliged to give to any person(s) so affected prior written notice of the reasons for any such action and of their rights of appeal, whether within the Society's own Adjudication and Reconciliation Procedures or employment law.
- 8.11 Special Works and Community Support Projects must act within the National Statutes in all matters, including those relating to finance and auditing and the compilation and submission of accounts which are required by the Trustees for inclusion in the consolidated accounts of the Society.
- 8.12 The Trustees, in consultation with National Council, shall draw up policies and approve procedures governing the development and management of Community Support Projects and major Special Works.

9. SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

- 9.1 If members of the Society are involved with other organisations, groups or individuals in any activity, work or project which conforms to the objectives of the Society but in which the Society does not have voting control, the above Statutes do not apply, and the Work is known as a Special Activity. It shall not operate under the name of the Society but may still be supported financially, with the approval of the Trustees, provided that the Society's financial contribution is proportionate to the Society's involvement and that the financial commitment is of limited duration as set by the Trustees.

10. AFFILIATED GROUPS

- 10.1 The Society accepts the principle of affiliated groups.
- 10.1.2 These groups will consist mainly of persons of other Churches and ecclesial communities or of non-Christian religions who are attracted by the work of the Society and/or its spirituality. They are welcome to participate in the work and fraternal life of the Society, but do not take part in the decision-making processes.
- They will be expected to have Safeguarding policies, which reflect the requirements of the Society's own policies."
- 10.1.3 Such Groups may be attached to a Church, if Christian, or a Temple or other place of Worship, if belonging to other Faiths. Such groups could be affiliated to a District or Central Council and the head of each Group would be welcomed to attend Council Meetings but would not be able to vote or become an Officer of the Council.
- 10.1.4 The Trustees, after consultation with the National Council, shall issue such guidance as may be needed to define the responsibilities of affiliated groups and the basis of their relationship with the Society.

11. THE TRUSTEES

- 11.1 The Board of Trustees comprises the Trustees and co-opted but non-voting members with specialist knowledge or expertise, who are nominated by the National President and approved by the National Council acting in its capacity as the corporate body of the Society.
- 11.2 The Trustees will be, to all legal effects, the sole responsible party before any national or international jurisdiction for the events occurring within England & Wales.
- 11.3 The powers, responsibilities and proceedings of the Trustees shall be as described in the Articles of Association of the St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales).
- 11.4 The Trustees of the Society in England & Wales must prepare and approve a Budget at the Board Meeting immediately before the commencement of the Financial Year against which actual income and expenditure of the year may be measured and remedial action taken where necessary.

- 11.5 Central Council Presidents may raise with the Board of Trustees matters of Policy or matters which the National Statutes require to be referred to the Board for a decision.

12. FINANCING AND ASSETS OF THE SOCIETY

- 12.1 All funds and property owned or held in the name of the Society belong to the Society and are to be used solely for purposes consistent with its approved charitable objects.

- 12.2 All funds held by Conferences, Councils or Special Works shall be held on trust in the name of the Society and shall be disbursed or retained solely within the Policies and limits set by the Trustees.

- 12.3 The primary sources of income of the Society shall be:

- regular donations from members;
- donations from appeals;
- grants and legacies;
- social enterprise activity;
- trading activity;
- gift aid.

- 12.4 The Trustees shall issue guidelines on the financial procedures to be followed by members and staff, including specified limits of delegated authority. Council Presidents, at any level, may require audits of Conferences, Councils, Special Works or Community Support Projects at any time, in addition to the annual audit.

- 12.5 The Trustees shall determine, after consultation with the National Council, the level of funds required to maintain the effective administration of the Society and the proportion of Conference income (to be known as SVP Support) which shall be made available for:

- the running costs of the Society nationally;
- redistribution to Central Councils to support the work of the Society in their respective localities;
- the support of the International Society;
- development of the Society worldwide.

- 12.6 The direct allocation of such funds will be applied to the service of those in need in England & Wales or of those served by the Society overseas. In faithfulness to the Society's spirit of non-accumulation of wealth and in accordance with Charity Commission Guidelines on "Cash Hoarding", funds may not be hoarded as a capital sum.

- 12.7 Funds may be sent abroad only through the National Office, under arrangements approved by the Trustees. As failure to comply with this Rule leaves the Society, and the members breaking the Rule, open to severe sanctions under UK Tax Laws, Charity Laws and Anti-Money Laundering legislation, Conferences and Councils are expressly prohibited from sending abroad Society Funds, including funds raised in the name of the Society, unless through the approved national channels.

- 12.8 Vincentians entrusted to undertake duly authorised offices, missions or tasks for the Society are entitled to reimbursement of the expenses incurred.
- 12.9 The authority to dispose of, purchase, mortgage, lease or rent the Society's real estate and fixed assets shall remain exclusively with the Trustees of the Society.
- 12.10 The authority to enter into any form of binding contract, whether for staff or services, shall be reserved to the Trustees, subject to any authority specifically delegated by them.
- 12.11 All legacies and bequests belong to the Society. If a Legacy is "restricted" as to area or purpose, the Trustees are still responsible for the Legacy and will consult with the relevant Central Council, District Council or Conference, as appropriate, as to the projects on which the funds can be utilised in accordance with the National Statutes of the Society, Charity Law and Charity Commission Guidelines.
- 12.12 The Articles of Association provide that in the event of the Society ceasing to exist in England and Wales all the Assets of the Society in England and Wales belong to the International Confederation of the Society based in Paris.

13. MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

- 13.1 The power to employ staff, to offer contracts of employment or contracts for services, is reserved to the Trustees, or to the Chief Executive, where responsibility has been specifically delegated as laid out in the relevant procedures.
- 13.2 Any staff employed by the Society shall be accountable, through their line managers, to the Chief Executive of the Society.
- 13.3 The employees of the Society shall be subject to the provisions of the Society's current Health and Safety Policy .
- 13.4 Employees of the Society, its Special Works or Community Support Projects, or of organisations controlled by the Society, may not be elected or appointed to any office within the Society, unless as member(s) or officer(s) of a Conference which does not have responsibility for the work on which they are employed.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 14.1 The Trustees shall draw up a policy, signed by the National President and which shall be binding on all members and officers of Conferences and Councils, and on all staff and volunteers employed or engaged by the Society.

15. ADJUDICATION AND RECONCILIATION PROCEDURES

- 15.1 The Trustees shall draw up appropriate policies and agree procedures for staff and members for the purpose of dealing with National grievances, disputes and disciplinary issues.

- 15.2 In accordance with the International Statutes, the National President has the delegated authority to suspend members, Conferences or Councils of the Society within the National Council area.
- 15.3 In the interest of the Society the National President may annul the election of a member as President of a Conference or Council.
- 15.4 When the National President has made such a decision, the member, Conference or Council suspended will cease to exercise any office and may not act on behalf of the Society under any circumstances.
- 15.5 The suspended member or, in the case of a suspended Conference, the President of that Conference, may appeal to the Trustees or to National Council, as directed by the Trustees.
- 15.6 The Trustees and National Council shall appoint an Adjudication and Reconciliation Committee to consider any such appeal and to present a report as a basis for decision by the Council.
- 15.7 However, such member, Conference or Council is entitled to appeal to the President- General; such entitlement will await the outcome of any appeal to the National Council.
- 15.8 Members, Conferences and Councils are expected to use the Society's own grievance procedures to resolve any internal disputes, unless Council-General expressly agrees that the dispute should be placed before the courts, and without prejudice to any individual civil rights or obligations. This does not refer to criminal behaviour. The Society cooperates fully with the civil and any criminal prosecution that they consider to be appropriate.

16. CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL STATUTES

- 16.1 Changes to the National Statutes of the Society may be made only upon a Special Resolution of the Corporate Body (National Council) of the Society in accordance with the requirements of the Articles of Association of the Society, for which the requisite notice has been given. Such resolutions and accompanying information aimed at helping National Council make an informed decision must be circulated at least two weeks before such a meeting.

Annex to The Rule and National Statutes

CONFERENCE MEETINGS

The purpose of our meetings is more than the routine exchange of information and the allocation of tasks. We come together regularly to deepen our spiritual life, to encourage each other in the quality and scope of our visits to those in need, to maintain our links with the wider Society, and to foster our Vincentian friendship. Meetings are held weekly, if possible after Holy Mass.

The Meeting will be more fruitful if the President has prepared an agenda.

Agenda Guide

Standard Items

Opening Prayers

Spiritual Reading and Reflections

Apologies

Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Correspondence

Treasurer's Report

Reports of visits (reports from each Member and decisions made)

Allocation of future visits

Secret Collection

Other business (see below)

Prayer Requests

Closing Prayers

Periodic or Occasional Items

Recruitment, Induction and Formation

Spiritual development (e.g. days of recollection)

Review of list of visits, local needs and priorities

Special activities – Masses for the Sick and Housebound; social events; outings

Twinning – correspondence with twinned Conference

Support for/ links with Special Works and Community Support Projects

Society notices – information from District Council, Central Council, or national office

Society events – local and national

Fundraising activity and events

Gift Aid

External communication/notices to parish

Conference Review and Renewal (National Statute 4.29)

Annual Report to Parish (National Statute-4.31)