Area Meeting Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Loyalty Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

Area Meeting seeks to conduct all its business in a spirit of worship, integrity, openness and trust wherever possible. Friends recognise that individual members, trustees, employees and volunteers may from time to time have interests or loyalties that could influence, or appear to influence, the discernment and decision-making of the Meeting.

This policy sets out how such conflicts should be identified, declared and managed so that decisions are made solely in the best interests of the Area Meeting and in accordance with Quaker faith and practice and charity law.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Members and Attenders participating in Meetings for Worship for Business;
- all trustees of the Area Meeting and its charities;
- members of Area Meeting committees and working groups;
- employees and volunteers acting on behalf of the Area Meeting.

Trustees remain subject to their additional legal duties under charity law.

3. Quaker Principles

As Friends, we seek to discern together the right way forward. Every person participating in a meeting for worship for business has a contribution to make to that discernment.

We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when an individual has a personal, financial or other interest which could conflict with, or be perceived to conflict with, the interests of the Area Meeting.

The aim of this policy is not to prevent Friends from serving the Meeting, but to ensure that such situations are handled openly, honestly and consistently, preserving the confidence of the Meeting and the wider public.

Trustees are responsible for implementing the decisions of the Area Meeting within the requirements of charity law. Trustees must always have regard to the spiritual discernment of the Area Meeting while exercising their independent legal responsibilities. Where trustees believe that a legal duty may require a different course of action from that discerned by the Meeting, the matter should normally be referred back to the Area Meeting so that the issues may be considered together in a Meeting for Worship for Business.

4. Definitions

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises where a person's personal, financial or other interests could influence, or reasonably appear to influence, the decisions they make on behalf of the Area Meeting.

Examples include:

- financial benefit;
- property interests;
- employment;
- contracts or paid work;
- family or close personal relationships;
- membership of another organisation affected by the decision.

Conflict of Loyalty

A conflict of loyalty arises where a Friend owes duties or loyalties to another organisation, committee or person which may compete with their duty to act solely in the interests of the Area Meeting.

Such conflicts are common within Quaker structures and do not necessarily prevent participation, provided they are openly declared and appropriately managed.

5. Responsibilities of All Friends

All Friends participating in Area Meeting business are expected to:

- consider before each meeting whether they have any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest or loyalty;
- declare any such conflict to the clerk before, or as soon as it becomes apparent during, the meeting;
- allow the meeting to decide how the conflict should be managed;
- respect any request to withdraw from discussion or decision-making;
- act at all times with honesty, openness and integrity.

Declarations and any action taken should be recorded in the minutes.

6. Additional Responsibilities of Trustees

Because trustees have legal responsibilities under charity law, they must also:

- act only in the best interests of the charity;
- avoid receiving unauthorised personal benefit;

- declare all actual, potential or perceived conflicts promptly;
- withdraw from discussion and decision-making where appropriate;
- ensure that conflicts are properly recorded in the minutes;
- maintain an up-to-date Register of Interests.

7. Register of Interests

The Area Meeting shall maintain a Register of Interests for trustees.

Trustees shall:

- complete a declaration on appointment;
- sign any required trustee eligibility or Fit and Proper Person declaration;
- declare relevant interests on joining the trustee body;
- notify the Clerk of Trustees promptly of any changes;
- review their declaration annually.

The Register shall be held by the Clerk of Trustees on behalf of the Area Meeting and made available for inspection by Members of the Religious Society of Friends on reasonable request.

Committee convenors may also maintain registers of interests where appropriate for committees with significant financial or governance responsibilities.

8. Induction and Training

New trustees shall receive an induction that includes:

- trustee duties;
- charity law responsibilities;
- conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalty;
- the operation of this policy.

Committee members should also be made aware of this policy when appointed.

9. Procedure at Meetings

At the beginning of each meeting for trustees, and whenever appropriate at Area Meeting or committee meetings, the clerk shall invite declarations of conflicts of interest or loyalty.

Where a conflict is declared, the meeting shall determine the appropriate course of action. This may include:

- noting the declaration without further action;
- permitting the Friend to remain for discussion but not participate in the decision;
- requesting the Friend to withdraw during discussion of the item;

- requesting the Friend to withdraw for both discussion and decision.

The decision of the meeting and any withdrawal shall be recorded in the minutes.

10. Employees

Employees may make valuable contributions to the discernment of the Meeting.

However, where discussion relates directly to their employment, remuneration, performance or contractual arrangements, they should withdraw from discussion and decision-making unless specifically invited to provide factual information.

11. Examples of Conflicts

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- serving on a committee which allocates funds while also serving on a committee seeking those funds;
- renting property owned by the Area Meeting;
- serving as a trustee while also serving on another Quaker charity affected by the decision;
- helping determine expenses rates while claiming significant expenses;
- helping determine room hire charges while representing a group hiring those rooms;
- decisions affecting a close family member or friend;
- providing professional services to the Area Meeting, whether paid or unpaid;
- decisions affecting an employer or organisation in which the Friend holds office.

These examples are illustrative only. Friends should declare any situation where there may reasonably be a perception of divided loyalties.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Clerk of Trustees shall ensure that:

- the Register of Interests is reviewed annually;
- this policy is reviewed every three years, or sooner if charity law or Quaker guidance changes.

13. Adoption

This policy was adopted by CEQ Trustees on: 4th August 2026 and Area Meeting on:

Review due: August 2029