



The secretary to the select vestry performs a central function and their work is key to the smooth running of the select vestry. This guide sets out what every select vestry member should know about the role of secretary.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLE OF SECRETARY

The role of the secretary is to support the chairperson and select vestry members in their activities, mainly through the duties of administration, record-keeping and facilitating effective meetings. The secretary usually acts as a point of reference for the chairperson and members to bring clarity on procedure, legal requirements, past decisions of the select vestry etc. Although the secretary must ensure that certain responsibilities are met, other select vestry members, including the chairperson, may assist by taking on some of the workload.

The select vestry appoints the secretary from among its members, or if the circumstances require it, a secretary may be appointed who is not a member of the select vestry but who is a member of the general vestry.

SECRETARY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the secretary are varied and will depend on the support required by, and the activities of, the particular select vestry. Some examples of typical administrative tasks a secretary would undertake, or assist the chairperson in doing, are:

ENSURING EFFECTIVE SELECT VESTRY MEETINGS

- planning and giving notice of meetings
- preparing an agenda with the chairperson
- circulating agenda and information to members
- minute-taking
- following voting procedures
- keeping a record of votes taken
- monitoring whether agreed actions are carried out

MAINTAINING SELECT VESTRY AND PARISH RECORDS

- maintaining up to date contact details for select vestry members and useful contacts for the parish
- retaining minutes in accordance with regulations of the diocesan synod
- filing any reports or supporting information presented to select vestry meetings
- keeping correspondence and important documents safe
- recording activities undertaken by the select vestry
- keeping a diary of events, meetings and planned parish activities

COMMUNICATION AND COMPLIANCE

- communicating with fellow select vestry members
- promptly responding to all written and electronic correspondence on behalf of the select vestry
- retaining copies of letters and emails
- keeping records of relevant parish and Church publications
- preparing an annual report of activities for the Easter vestry meeting and diocesan council
- preparing annual reports for regulatory bodies as required (e.g. under company or charity law)
- managing elections of positions within the select vestry
- following any other Church procedure relevant to select vestry activities

GENERAL VESTRY SECRETARY

The secretary to the select vestry also acts as the secretary to the general vestry. In this role, the secretary will be responsible for the agenda and minutes in respect of the annual Easter vestry meeting and any other meetings of the general vestry. The secretary must also ensure that diocesan returns are made on behalf of the general vestry.

AN EFFECTIVE SECRETARY

Effective secretaries often have certain attributes, knowledge and skills. Ideally, the secretary should:

- be organised, methodical and well prepared for meetings
- be objective, fair and respect confidentiality
- handle correspondence promptly and keep up to date records of business
- ensure accurate meeting notes are recorded, minutes circulated, read, agreed, signed and retained
- make sure select vestry members receive all the necessary material (e.g. agenda) prior to meetings
- become familiar with meeting procedures
- work comfortably with other members and support the chairperson

NOTE ON COMPANY LAW

If the select vestry has taken steps to set up a company, a Company Secretary may have been appointed. This is a separate role from that of a secretary to the select vestry and carries greater responsibility to ensure that the requirements of company law are complied with.