

Conflict of Interests

1. The following notes are intended as guidance for Diocesan Advisory Committee Chairmen, Secretaries, members and advisors in identifying potential conflicts of interest which may arise during the course of DAC work and the appropriate response following declaration of such an interest.
2. The purpose of declaring an interest is to ‘avoid any danger of members being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, in the exercise of their duties as a member, by their private interests or the interests of those persons or bodies they are closely connected with’. (Archbishops’ Council Code of Conduct)
3. Potential conflicts of interest are generally handled in two ways: registration in a Register of Interests; oral declaration of interests at a meeting if it is relevant in the context of the matter under consideration.
4. In the work of DACs, where local knowledge is at a premium, it is likely members may have substantial (and constantly changing) indirect contact with churches, in particular, for example, archdeacons and professionals such as architects. For this reason, DACs may feel it unhelpful to maintain a Register. Where this is so, it becomes essential to ensure that any potential conflicts are raised orally.
5. Conflicts of interest meriting particular mention are:
 - Financial interest, direct or indirect;
 - Personal non-financial interests, including those which arise from membership or holding office in the Church and other bodies.

In the work of the DAC, the most common interest is likely to arise when a member is incumbent or priest in charge of the parish in question or when a member is professionally involved with any aspect of the matter under discussion, e.g. architect, artist, conservator. Financial interest can also include circumstances where a business partner or colleague is directly involved, particularly where the practice is small.
6. Any oral declaration of interest, including the reason for it, should be raised before the matter to which it relates comes forward for discussion. Once a declaration has been made, the member should generally withdraw from the meeting while the item is under discussion. The declaration, reason and subsequent action should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. For example, “Mr Smith declared an interest in the next item as the incumbent of the parish and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion”.
7. Exceptionally Chairman may feel that there are circumstances where a member could remain in the meeting and not take part in the discussion. Where a member remains, the Chairman may also feel there are circumstances where they can be invited to provide points of information which would be of assistance to the DAC. These should always be points of fact rather than opinion.
8. More generally DACs should not allow members any special privileges. Care should be taken to ensure that projects are not given preferential consideration over other projects because it is possible to ask questions of the member involved. As a general rule, the DAC should not be persuaded by information which is only provided by the member involved. It may be helpful in practice not to allow personal presentation of projects unless this is a common practice for those who are not members of the DAC.

9. Where it is necessary for a Chairman to declare an interest the Vice-chair should take the chair for the item.

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