



Council and Volunteer Principles

Welcome

Thank you for joining Council / volunteering.

The Highgate Society depends on the efforts of nearly a hundred committed individuals, who give their time and expertise generously and care about Highgate and making it a better place to live and work.

This document sets out some principles to be followed by Council members and other volunteers. It is not intended to be over-prescriptive or to inhibit freedom of action but is to make sure we're able to work together effectively.

Objectives of the Highgate Society

Our constitution states that:

“The Society exists for the public benefit in the area comprising Highgate and its vicinity. Its objects shall be:

(i) to promote civic pride and a vigorous community life;

(ii) to promote high standards of planning and architecture;

(iii) to educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area;

(iv) to secure the preservation, protection and enhancement of features of historic or public interest;

(v) to promote improvements to public transport and to the management of traffic.”

We work in pursuit of these objectives.

Types of involvement

The Society provides a home for several types of involvement:

- Council members
- Others who are active volunteers, including committee members who are not on Council
- Groups such as Watercolour group, Life drawing and French circle who meet at 10A and carry out their activities as affiliates of the Highgate Society. The arrangements for

Governance Structure and Finance in sections 6 and 7 do not apply to these groups which are responsible for their own governance structures and financial management.

When as Council members, volunteers and members of affiliated groups we organise or undertake activity in the name of the Highgate Society we agree to follow the principles set out below.

Where anyone believes that a Council or committee member or other volunteer is not adhering to these Principles the matter should be referred to the Chair who together with the other Officers of the Society will consider the matter and determine an appropriate resolution.

1. Protecting our reputation

The Highgate Society, founded in 1967 is one of the oldest, largest and most active civic amenity societies in the UK, with some 1,200 members. We have been highly successful and have an enviable reputation nationally as well as locally that has been earned over many years.

We understand that:

- How we work together and what we say as representatives of the Highgate Society all contributes to this reputation.
- Our reputation is critical in recruiting and retaining ordinary members, Council members and volunteers.
- The Highgate Society name, logo and brand identity need to be used appropriately so that our posters, statements and publications are instantly recognisable. (Refer to the Brand Guidelines for more details.)

2. Working together collaboratively

We work together respectfully and collaboratively. We welcome and respect a diversity of views from the whole of the Highgate community. We treat our fellow members in a courteous and respectful manner, taking into account that they give their time voluntarily.

Differences of opinion should be resolved within the Society rather than in any public forum.

Conflicts of aims or overlaps between Committees should if possible be resolved between Committee Chairs, and if not should be referred to the Chair for resolution.

Any member who feels harassed or victimised in the course of their activities may refer the matter to the Chair or any Officer of the Society.

We agree to the following:

- We make sure our contributions to discussions are constructive, respectful, and value the opinions of others.
- We welcome and respect different views and feedback.
- We understand the need to take account of different strongly held views, but once a decision has been made, we will work together constructively to focus together on achieving our objectives.

- When we agree to take on an action, task or responsibility, we make every effort to do what we have committed to by the agreed deadline. If we are no longer able to do so, we let others know as soon as possible.
- We understand that as volunteers we each individually choose to give different levels of time to the Highgate Society and that requests we make of others need to recognise each person's voluntary time commitment.

3. Communicating and keeping in touch

We stay in contact with those we're working with.

If something could be sensitive, libellous or defamatory we check before speaking, sending, posting or publishing.

We keep in touch with the people we are collaborating with - through email, telephone, or whatever channel of communication has been agreed - to make the most of our collective wisdom, knowledge and experience.

As individuals we do not hold ourselves out as speaking on behalf of the Highgate Society other than with the appropriate prior authority.

We agree to the following:

- Using the communication channels agreed, we keep in touch with those we are collaborating with - about progress, problems or decisions that need to be made.
- We agree to share our contact details with other Council members and volunteers with key responsibilities.
- We offer and invite constructive feedback to help make sure we're taking the right collective decisions, putting out high quality materials, and making the most of the opportunities to work in teams appropriate for the task in hand in pursuit of agreed objectives.
- We consider the legal and other implications of documents and comments. If a comment, document or announcement is going to be seen widely, could have a big impact, or is sensitive in nature, we make sure it has been checked by someone with suitable experience, an Officer of the Society, Committee Chair, Vice President or President ***before speaking, sending, posting, or publishing***. Examples of such comments, documents or announcements include (but are not limited to) (i) statements of Highgate Society policy and views, (ii) topics where there are or may be expected to be strongly held and different views in the community and (iii) comments to the press.

4. Conflicts of Interest

Members entrust the management of the Society to Council and must be confident that no one with influence in the Society is able to use their position for financial or professional advantage.

We agree to conform to Section 10 of the Constitution "Declaration of Interest", the text of which is copied below.

10. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

It shall be the duty of every Council member and every member of any committee or sub-committee who has an interest financially or professionally in any item discussed at any Council meeting or any other meeting of the Society (including any meeting of any committee or sub-committee meeting) at which the member is present to declare such interest. Any such member declaring an interest shall not discuss the item (except by consent of Council or the committee as appropriate) nor vote thereon.

5. Data Protection

We agree that our handling of personal data will conform with the principles of GDPR, which may be summarised as:

- Personal data should be accurate, should only be handled with the owner's consent and for the purpose for which it is gathered, and should be held only as long as necessary for that purpose
- Personal data such as email addresses or telephone numbers should not be shared with any organisation outside the Society, except with agreement.
- Personal data should be protected from unauthorised disclosure, e.g. by limiting access and/or encryption
- Any suspected or alleged breach of these principles should be reported promptly to the Secretary of the Society, who will consider what further action is required.

6. Governance structure

The Society is governed by a Council, the members of which are elected by the membership. Council delegates the greater part of the Society's work to Committees. Appendix 1 outlines the principles by which Committees are appointed, operate and resolve issues.

We agree to follow these principles.

7. Finance

Volunteers are expected to exercise good judgement in incurring costs on behalf of the Society. Depending on the circumstances, care is needed to ensure that no liabilities or risks are incurred without the proper authority in accordance with the limits set.

Expenditure must be for the overall purpose of furthering the objectives of the Society.

Further details are included in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1

Council and Committees

1. As the governing body, Council safeguards the reputation of the Society in the wider community, as well as the interests of the Society's membership and its financial wellbeing.
2. Committees are constituted by Council as required. Many are long lived: for example, Planning and Traffic & Transport have existed in some form for effectively the life of the Society. When a Committee is constituted, its Terms of Reference would normally be proposed by the relevant Committee and approved by Council, and may from time to time be reviewed and revised. Council shall maintain a list of Committees, their Chairs and their membership.
3. A Committee may appoint members as it wishes and should appoint a Chair. Committee members should be members of the Society. Non-members representing particular interests or with particular expertise are welcome to attend and participate in meetings provided they make clear the capacity in which they attend and do not vote.
4. Committees should determine which of their members is responsible for record keeping and for communication to Council.
5. A Committee should minute its meetings and decisions, and record these in a form accessible by Council. Interim reports on progress from Committees should be submitted to Council via the Secretary. Copies of all minutes, formal decisions, other proceedings of significance, press cuttings on the activities of the Society or its constituent members, and publications, should be deposited, either digitally or in hard copy, with the Secretary for storage in the Society's archive as a permanent record of its activities.
6. Committees are free to decide how they conduct their day to day business providing they keep proper records of meetings and decisions and communicate appropriately to Council. A Committee may appoint a sub-committee for a specific task within its remit.
7. When a Committee requires a decision to be made, it should endeavour to do so by seeking a consensus. If necessary a vote may be taken and the Committee Chair shall have a casting vote in the event of a tie.
8. Committee Chairs should give the Secretary to the Council adequate notice of items that the Committee wishes to refer to Council. Complex issues should be accompanied by an explanatory paper which should be made available for circulation with the agenda of the Council meeting, at least one week before the meeting.
9. Committees and other activity groups should appoint a member to be the main point of contact, and this member (with whatever contact details he/she prefers) should be listed in Buzz.

Appendix 2

Financial management

This appendix includes only topics of general interest and where a volunteer role has more specific financial management responsibilities, these are covered in the Financial Procedures.

Incoming income

Incoming cash and cheques must be paid into the Society's bank account promptly by the volunteer who received the income. Details of the banking should be notified by email to the treasurer (treasurer@highgatesociety.com) and included in the reference shown on the bank transfer.

The Society's bank account details are:

Bank Barclays Bank
Name The Highgate Society
Sort code 20-36-16
Account no. 30044628

Expenditure approval limits

Expenditure is committed when an order is placed or expense incurred on behalf of the Society. Therefore, it is important that all orders are placed properly, and are within agreed budgets and delegated powers as below.

These limits are applicable provided the expenditure is covered by directly related income or is in line with previously agreed budgets / expenditure patterns. Any expenditure outside the Society's normal scope of activity should be referred to the treasurer who can advise if Council approval is required.

Estimated Value £	Delegated Authority	Notes
Below £150	Volunteer	Volunteers may incur expenses for costs which are in line with the Society's objectives.
£151 to £1,000	Volunteer plus Treasurer, Chair or Secretary	Normally two quotations
£1,001 upwards	Council	Normally three quotations

Any lease or other contract involving expenditure is subject to the same authorisation procedure as above, with the appropriate expenditure amount being the total committed expenditure over the period of the contract, or where the contract is open-ended, over the first three years of the contract.

Volunteers' expenses

Reasonable expenses of volunteers will be reimbursed by online bank transfer. The Society does not give cash reimbursement. When making a first claim, please provide details of the bank account to which payment should be made. Claims should be supported by receipts or, where this is not possible, by an explanation of the nature and purpose of the expenditure.

Claims should normally be submitted by email to treasurer@highgatesociety.com, with photos or scans of the receipts.

Supplier invoices

Suppliers must be requested to provide invoices. If payment is required on or before delivery or no credit is given, volunteers may incur the expenditure themselves and submit a claim for reimbursement.

Supplier invoices should be forwarded by email to treasurer@highgatesociety.com. The email should clearly state that the invoice is approved for payment and the details of the nature and purpose of the expenditure.

Any queries should be taken up with the supplier before the invoice is passed to the treasurer. However, please advise the treasurer of any material amounts in dispute and of the expected rough amount that will eventually be payable.

Processing of payments

The treasurer (or his / her substitute) will endeavour to pay expense claims and invoices within two weeks of a payment request, although during holidays or in unforeseen circumstances there may be slightly longer timescales.