

Shah Jahan Mosque - Our constitution explained

Our constitution sets out how Shah Jahan Mosque is governed, how decisions are made and how its money and property are protected. It is based on the Charity Commission's model constitution for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), adapted to reflect the mosque's purposes and governance arrangements. This is a short guide to the constitution dated 2 April 2024.

Our purpose

Shah Jahan Mosque exists to advance the Islamic faith in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah, serve the religious, educational and wider needs of the Muslim community in Woking and its surrounding area, promote understanding of Islam, and preserve and celebrate Britain's first purpose-built mosque.

Who is responsible?

The mosque is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered with the Charity Commission under number **1207685**.

It is governed by a Board of between three and twelve trustees. Up to four seats are held by designated Pakistan High Commission office-holders: the High Commissioner, Defence and Naval Adviser, Minister Coordination and Counsellor–Head of Chancery.

Other trustees are appointed by the Board, taking account of the skills, knowledge and experience the mosque needs. All trustees share responsibility for acting in the mosque's best interests.

Who can become a trustee?

Trustees must meet the constitution's eligibility requirements, including being at least 25 and meeting its faith criteria. Appointed trustees must normally have lived for at least three years in Woking, Surrey Heath, Guildford, Runnymede or Elmbridge boroughs. This residence requirement can be waived in exceptional circumstances; it does not apply to the PHC office-holders.

Appointments are normally for three years, although shorter terms are permitted. Trustees may be reappointed, but after three consecutive terms they must take a break of at least one year.

How are decisions made?

Trustees make decisions collectively under the constitution's meeting, quorum and voting rules. These include an ex-officio attendance requirement where the quorum is three, with provision for an alternative meeting if that requirement is not met. Written or electronic decisions are also permitted under specified procedures.

The Board can delegate work to committees, whose proceedings must be reported back. Trustees must declare conflicts of interest and withdraw from affected discussions and decisions.

The trustees are also the CIO's legal voting members.

How are money and assets protected?

The mosque's income and property must be used solely for its charitable purposes. Our constitution places stricter restrictions on trustee financial benefits than the Charity Commission's standard CIO model. Trustees and connected persons cannot receive remuneration or other financial benefits without authorisation from the court or the Charity Commission's prior written consent. The Board cannot approve these benefits on its own. Reasonable expenses properly incurred on mosque business and permitted indemnity insurance are separately allowed under the constitution.

The mosque must keep financial records, prepare annual reports and accounts, and submit them to the Charity Commission. If the charity closes, any remaining assets must be used for the same or similar charitable purposes.

Can the constitution change?

Yes, through the formal voting procedures it specifies. Certain changes also require Charity Commission approval. The constitution provides for mediation where disputes about its operation cannot be resolved by agreement.

How were the trustees selected?

In late 2024, applications were invited for new trustees. Thirty-two applications were received, and through a process with the then existing trustees, the Pakistan High Commission and the High Commissioner personally, five trustees were selected. The selected trustees joined the two initial appointed trustees named in the constitution, Shamas Tabrez and Misdaq Zaidi, alongside the ex-officio trustees from the High Commission. Details of the Board can be found on the Charity Commission website.

How is the Board's work organised?

Three subcommittees currently support the Board. The Finance Committee, led by Somia Shafiq, oversees budgets, financial reporting, controls, reserves and financial risk. The Asset and Property Committee, led by Muhammad Kamal, oversees the safety and maintenance of the mosque's buildings and grounds, including repairs and major works. The Services and Impact Committee, led by Ashar Khan, oversees the quality of services, safeguarding, staffing needs and the difference our activities make for the community. Each committee reports to the full Board, which has oversight and retains overall responsibility.