

Constitution *(approved following AGM 2022)*

1. The Name of the Forum and the Area Covered

The name of the Association shall be the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum [SuStM]. The area covered shall be the two city wards of Summertown and St Margaret's as defined for the Oxford City Council elections of May 2014.

2. Aim

The aim of the Neighbourhood Forum (FORUM) is to enable all those with an interest in the Forum area (as defined below) to meet to discuss common concerns with the intention of maintaining and improving the social, environmental and economic well-being of the Forum area. It has no political allegiance and operates by consensus for the benefit of those who live and work in the area.

3. Objectives

The purpose of the Forum is to:

- i) involve local people in shaping and influencing Council and other agencies' policies and programmes
- ii) provide a platform for local people to make their views heard
- iii) identify opportunities for growth and investment while protecting and enhancing the historic character of the area
- iv) identify ways of improving the local environment and amenity
- v) seek to create and promote a neighbourhood plan for the forum area
- vi) secure the support of the residents of the forum area for the neighbourhood plan (NP)

4. Membership

4.1 Membership of the FORUM shall be open to anyone who falls within the categories defined in 4.4 below.

4.2 Only registered members shall be entitled to vote at Forum meetings. Registration is effected by completing a form, a supply of which will be available at meetings, on request from the Secretary, or via the website.

4.3 Voting will be limited to members and the voting age will be restricted in accordance with the law.

4.4 Categories of members:

- i) individuals who live or work in the Forum area
- ii) representatives of residents'/tenants' associations, membership-based societies or community groups within the forum area
- iii) representatives of businesses with a local office/outlet in the Forum area.
- iv) individuals who are elected members of the City or County of Oxford for wards/divisions, any part of which fall within the Forum area

5. Steering Committee and Officers

5.1 At the AGM the members present shall elect a Steering Committee (SC) with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 members. The SC shall appoint a Chair (who will also be the Chair of the Forum), Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and the Chairs of the SC sub-committees.

5.2 Nominations for election to the SC, with proposer and seconder, both Forum members, must be in writing and received by the Chair or Secretary 10 days before the AGM.

5.3 Members appointed to the SC shall retain office for three consecutive years, and can then stand for one further term of three years, after which they shall not be eligible for re-election until a further year has passed.

5.4 The SC shall have the power to co-opt a member

(i) to fill a casual vacancy on the SC or

(ii) to provide specialist skills for a particular project or sub-committee

such co-option to continue until the next AGM, when he/she shall either stand for election or retire from post.

5.5 The quorum for SC meetings shall be 5 members. All members who are elected and not ex officio will have voting rights. SC decision-making will aim at consensus but in the event of a tied vote, the Chair will have a second casting vote.

5.6 The SC shall have the right to invite the following to be ex officio members of the SC: the sitting MP, Councillors for the wards/divisions included in the Forum area.

5.7 The Treasurer with the authority of the SC will

(i) maintain the finances of the Forum

(ii) report at each meeting of the SC and AGM

(iii) require the payment of an annual membership fee if this becomes necessary

6. Meetings

6.1 Open Public Meetings of the Forum shall be held at least twice a year to discuss issues raised by members.

6.2 One of these meetings, to be held in or around October of each year, shall be designated as the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

6.3 Public Meetings shall be publicised on the Forum website, at the North Oxford Association (NOA), St Margaret's Institute (SMI), and at Cutteslowe Community Centre (CCC).

6.4 Voting decisions at a public meeting, at an AGM or EGM, other than amendments to the Constitution, shall be by a simple majority of the members present, the Chair having the casting vote.

6.5 The public is welcome to attend all Forum meetings. Non-members may speak at these meetings but only members can vote.

6.6 AGM

There shall be a minimum of 28 days' notice of the meeting.

Notice of the AGM shall be posted on the Forum website, at NOA, SMI and CCC at least 28 days before the meeting

A quorum for the AGM shall be 21 members

Notice of any proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be posted on the Forum website, at NOA, SMI and CCC and emailed to all registered members at their last known email address at least 21 days before the meeting at which the amendment is to be put. This will usually be at the AGM but may be at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). An amendment to the Constitution shall only be made with the approval of a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

The business of each AGM will be:

(i) to receive the annual SC report

(ii) to receive the annual accounts of the previous year

(iii) to decide on the nature of the audit to be undertaken

(iv) to elect SC members

(v) to receive sub-committee reports

6.8 EGM

An EGM can be convened at any point by the Chair, or on written request for an EGM signed by at least 10% of the membership and specifying the business to be transacted.

The SC must convene the EGM within 35 days of a valid written request.

A minimum of 21 days' notice shall be given for an EGM. Notice of the EGM shall be posted on the Forum website, at NOA and at SMI.

7. Finance

7.1 The Treasurer shall, on behalf of the FORUM, maintain a bank account in the name of the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum.

7.2 There shall be 3 signatories of the bank account. All cheques must be signed by two of the signatories.

7.3 The Treasurer shall prepare a written report for the AGM and Finance shall be an item at each SC Meeting.

8. Code of Conduct for Steering Committee members

The Code follows the Nolan principles for standards in public life (www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life). It is assumed that, by standing and remaining as an SC member, members accept the following guidelines:

8.1 **Respect** for each other's views. In cases where a decision has to be made after open debate, the Chair will have ultimate authority.

8.2 **Integrity.** SC members are expected to use their expertise and experience to make the best decisions they can for the FORUM. They are equally responsible for all decisions of the SC.

8.3 **Commitment.** SC members should endeavour to devote sufficient time to preparing for and attending meetings to ensure that they add value to the work of the SC or any sub-committee. A member of the SC who fails to attend four meetings in a row without good reason will need to seek approval to remain on the SC for the remainder of that year.

8.4 **No personal benefit.**

8.5 **No conflict of interest.** SC Members should identify and promptly declare any actual, perceived or potential conflicts and should absent themselves from any discussion involving such a conflict.

8.6 **Openness and Accountability** to each other, the members and other stakeholders for their actions and decisions.

8.7 **Confidentiality.** SC Members are expected to respect confidentiality and not to comment externally on discussions or on the views of individual SC members.

9. Funds and Winding Up

9.1 Any assets or income of the Forum shall only be used in a manner that the Forum considers will benefit the area. Payments to members of the Forum shall not be considered such a benefit.

9.2 The Forum may be dissolved by resolution at an AGM or EGM, if two-thirds of members present and voting are in favour. The period of notice and method of giving notice shall be as provided for a proposed amendment to the constitution (see para 6.6 above).

9.3 In the event of the winding up of the Forum or in any other circumstances where the FORUM ceases to function, its assets shall be transferred to one or more organisations having objects similar to the Forum or, where there is no such organisation, to an appropriate charity. The organization shall be chosen by the SC and approved at the meeting where the decision to dissolve the Forum is taken.