



## **Proposed changes to Guild management structure**

### **Background**

We are in a world of significant and fast change. Bellringing, whilst being an historic art steeped in history and tradition, has to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for ringers' time to keep the art of ringing alive and healthy for this and future generations.

The average age of Guild membership has increased significantly. A sustainable ringing community requires a balanced mix of ages and the current imbalance needs to be corrected by attracting ringers of all ages but especially younger recruits. It needs to compete with other activities for people's time.

The Guild should adapt and modernise its organisation in order to remain relevant to its membership whilst preserving the history.

Much has been said about this already within the ringing community and many ringing organisations have already recognised this - hence the changes in the structure of the Central Council and a number of Guilds and Associations (e.g. Bedfordshire Association, St Martin's Guild) whilst a number of others are currently looking at how to change and adapt.

### **Modernising Guild Management**

As a first step in this direction for the Oxford Diocesan Guild, the Officers propose streamlining the Guild's management structure before considering other changes such as the Guild's objects and activities, or the structure and management of its branches.

It is possible the Guild may benefit from becoming a charity in the future. If it does, it will require a more formal management and scrutiny structure – this is incorporated into the proposed changes below.

### **Why is change needed**

Current challenges with the existing structure:

- Current leadership and management of the Guild lies with the 50+ members of the General Committee not with the Guild Officers.
- Guild officer roles/job descriptions as listed on the Guild's website (see Appendix 1) focus on day to day administrative matters.
- Whilst the current officers are thinking strategically about the future of the Guild this is more a case of it being discretionary rather than a requirement of the role. The current structure puts responsibility for strategic thinking, in the hands of the General Committee – this is a body of over 50 members and is too big to undertake this role. The General Committee has expanded hugely in numbers over the last few years and meets infrequently.
- Significant time is taken up at meetings and preparing for these meetings, and these do not address the issues raised above. Such meetings do not take the Guild forward and are not a good use of everybody's time.

- The current officers have very limited formal powers to undertake anything other than administrative matters.

### **What is proposed**

- It is proposed to move responsibility for the management and running of the Guild - and setting future strategic direction - to the Officers of the Guild by the formation of an Executive Committee, to be known as the Executive. This Executive will consist of officers elected by the members of the Guild. In particular it will comprise Master, Deputy Master, Secretary, Treasurer, PR officer. The Executive may also co-opt specialists or advisers onto its Committee to assist them. It is anticipated the Executive will work by consensus and co-opted members will advise the Executive – but it is not expected the Executive will work on the basis of passing formal votes on matters.
- The Executive will have the power to set up, revise or dissolve sub-committees/workgroups where they are needed to undertake the Guild’s work. They may be for ongoing functions (such as education) or they may be for specific tasks (such as working on further steps in the reform, or setting up a membership system, etc). Such sub-committees will report to the Executive.
- There will also be a number of non-executive officer roles to provide other services to the Guild. These individuals will be elected by Guild members at the AGM and report to the Executive. They will consist of the following roles:
  - Deputy Treasurer
  - Deputy Secretary
  - Peal Secretary
  - Membership Secretary
  - Safeguarding officer
  - Odd Bob Editor
  - Report editor
  - Young ringers rep
  - Guild librarian
  - Web manager
  - IT manager
  - Diocesan Rep
  - Central Council reps
- The General Committee will cease to exist but there will instead be a Governance and Scrutiny Committee consisting of approximately 20 members whose role is to scrutinise the work of the Executive and hold them to account.
- The membership of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee is expected to be:
  - One spokesperson for each branch (15)
  - Ringing Vice Presidents

- The Chair of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee will be one of the Ringing VP's (the deputy Chair will be another). They will be elected by Guild members at the AGM.
- The role of the branch spokesperson will be an important role, given they will form a key constituent part of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee and responsible for holding the Executive to account. They will need to be aware of the views of their Members in order to represent these at the Governance and Scrutiny Committee meetings and convey back to their Members key matters arising from these meetings. They are the link between the Executive and the Guild Members hence strong communication skills will be necessary. The branch spokesperson could be one of the current branch officers (but does not have to be). The role of the branch reps will disappear. Branches can decide how their spokesperson is elected but they may well be appointed at branch AGMs.
- The Executive will meet regularly, at least monthly. Minutes will record the discussions which take place at these meetings and the actions which will follow. These minutes will be posted onto the Guild website and also be available to members through membership mojo.
- The Deputy Secretary will be responsible for recording the minutes of the following: Executive meetings, Governance and Scrutiny Committee meetings and the AGM. Governance and Scrutiny minutes will need to be approved by the Chairman of that Committee prior to circulation.
- The Executive will have the following powers:
  - It shall manage and administer the Guild's property and affairs in pursuit of the Guild's objects and in accordance with its rules and policies
  - The property, funds and assets of the Guild will be vested in the Executive.
  - The Executive shall have the power to do anything not in conflict with the Guild's rules. It shall not do anything which could bring the Guild into disrepute
  - The Executive will only exercise the following powers with the specific approval of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee:
    - Borrow money
    - Acquire or dispose of significant assets
    - Make any decision which reduces or places at risk the Guild's total assets by more than 30% of their value as reported to the most recent Annual General Meeting
  - The Executive may conduct its processes as it thinks fit subject to the requirements of the Guild's rules.
- The job descriptions of the Executive members will be modified to reflect the above and also to make clear that the strategic direction and management of the Guild is the responsibility of the Executive as a group. The roles move to ones of adding value rather than being procedural.
- An AGM will be the formal business meeting at which members have a say and elect the Executive, Non Executive Officers and Chair and Deputy Chair of the Governance

Committee.

- The agenda for the AGM is intended to remain largely unchanged to the current position. The Guild Master will chair the AGM.
- The Governance and Scrutiny Committee will act on behalf of the members in holding the Executive accountable. It will need to approve any decisions on the matters which are referred to above that require its approval. Whilst it is not intended that it will have the power to sanction the Executive, it will have the power to call an EGM in the event it has material concerns about the Executive or specific members of the Executive. Whilst it will have the power to report to members at the AGM, it is envisaged that it will be guided by the views of the wider membership of the Guild for which it represents. All members will be represented on the Governance and Scrutiny Committee through their branch spokesperson and will be able to receive (via Membership Mojo or on the Guild website) regular updates from the Executive. This process and Governance structure puts in place opportunity for members to raise any questions or concerns about the plans or actions of the Executive. Whilst the AGM is primarily reserved for certain formal items (eg election of officers, donations from the fund etc) and a reporting mechanism, members will be free to raise specific issues for discussion if they feel a wider debate is needed.
- The Executive will prepare for and set the agenda for the AGM but will confirm content with the Governance and Scrutiny Committee.
- It is envisaged there will be in the region of six Governance and Scrutiny Committee meetings a year of which one will be a formal meeting in person. Whilst the agenda for such meetings will be flexible to adapt to the matters on hand, an example agenda is set out at Appendix 2. Additional meetings will be convened (physically or virtually) at the request of the Executive or the Governance and Scrutiny Committee. However, the intention is that the Governance and Scrutiny Committee (or members thereof) are in regular dialogue with the Executive. Their purposes is to facilitate and formalise the scrutiny process and provide a forum for effective challenge of the Executive's actions. This will determine the need for meetings. It is hoped there will be a constructive working relationship between the two groups.

#### **How will this make things different**

- Streamlining the Guild's management is the first step in the modernisation plan to make the Guild fit for the modern age.
- It will vest responsibility for the future strategy and management of the Guild in the hands of elected officers (the Executive).
- Elected officers will have the power to run and shape the Guild but with certain restrictions. They will be accountable to Guild members through the Governance and Scrutiny Committee. Members have their say through their branch spokesperson on the Governance and Scrutiny Committee and also, if needed, at the AGM.

- Empowering the Executive together with it forming more of a cohesive body and meeting frequently (as a body), will help the Guild to be more agile and more likely to be able to modernise and become fit for the future. The Executive officers' roles will be focussed on strategic planning for the future, whilst continuing to ensure the day to day activities are still managed. Such a refocus and streamlining should be a more productive and focussed use of Officers' time.
- Sub-committees can be easily formed to support the Executive with its work – especially with the day to day matters referred to above, or on other specific areas such as learning and development.