

The Revised Central Council Rules

Part 4 of 4 – The Final Edition and Lancaster Meeting

On 23rd February, we published the final version of the Council's revised governing documents, to be submitted for approval at the Council's Lancaster Meeting in May.

This is the product of six months of effort commencing last August and was triggered by the CRAG proposals agreed at the 2017 Edinburgh Council Meeting, which recommended a number of improvements to the Council's governing structures so as to make it more responsive to the needs of societies and individual ringers.

The revised governing documents which you now see have undergone three stages of consultation with Council members, societies and ringers, spanning a total of 10 weeks between September and January.

In September, we consulted on our approach to the task ahead and in October we published the First Edition of the revised rules. Comments received indicated a desire for some changes and greater simplicity of language, and these were reflected in a Second Edition, published for consultation in December.

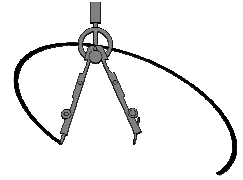
Throughout our journey we have been mindful of our three core objectives: to implement those CRAG reforms agreed at Edinburgh which are required in May 2018, to ensure the Council's rules follow current Charity Commission guidance and to simplify the rules where possible.

We have tried to apply these objectives in a way which is true to the principles of reform on which the Council has agreed so as to create an organisational structure which is fit for the future, but which also draws its strength from the Council's enduring values and culture of volunteering.

Feedback on the Second Edition

We are again very grateful to those Council members and ringers who gave their time to review the Second Edition during the four weeks of consultation ending on 12th January. Overall, the response was much more positive and except for those points highlighted in this update, the vast majority of the 210 comments received related to matters of fine tuning.

As before, a digest of the feedback we have received can be found on the Rules Work pages of the Council's Website at <https://cccbr.org.uk/about/reform/rules/>. and we have again been able to implement most of the recommendations received.



The Rules and Standing Orders

The Second Edition was presented in the form of a set of Rules (containing the fundamentals) and Standing Orders (or byelaws) holding more detailed procedures. This was a key recommendation of our Review Panel and it has found favour with those who reviewed the Second Edition. In this format, the Rules contain only fundamental matters which cannot be relegated to the Standing Orders, which makes them easier to read.

The new Executive: managers or trustees ?

A key CRAG proposal agreed at Edinburgh was that the Council should “*transfer management of its affairs ... to an Executive of eight people (including President, Deputy President, Secretary and Treasurer and four other elected members).*”

The same proposal stated that the Executive should be the trustees of the Council “for the purposes of running the charity”.

Whilst the name “Executive” implies a group of dynamic, ‘hands-on’ people it is important to note that under CRAG’s proposals the Council’s governance is in fact being brought into line with most other charities, with the Executive as the charity’s trustees.

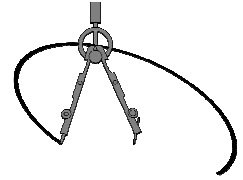
Trustees have a legal responsibility to oversee the work of their Charity on behalf of its members. Under Charity law trustees are not managers, but part of the governing body, with a duty to ensure that a charity remains solvent, has strategic direction and is acting for the public benefit, in line with its objects and with the law.

For this reason the revised rules prohibit Executive members from sitting at the same time on Workgroups or serving as Stewards. If they did they would in effect be overseeing themselves.

The final edition of the revised rules introduces greater clarity on this point by referring to Executive Members as ‘Trustees’.

The Four ‘Ordinary’ Executive Members

In the interests of simplicity, the Second Edition allowed for the four new trustees (named “Ordinary Trustees”) who will join the Council’s existing four (creating an Executive of eight) to be selected in advance of the Council’s Lancaster meeting.



This approach kept things simple, but was perhaps too contrived and feedback during consultation indicated a preference that all four of these new roles should be elected at the Lancaster meeting.

The Transition Motion, which defines how the revised rules will be introduced, has therefore been amended so that these four new roles are elected and nominations will be sought in the usual way ahead of the Lancaster weekend.

Brevity

We have done our best to fulfil our mission to keep things simple, although we have also had to bring the Council's rulebook into line with Charity Commission guidance and add controls to ensure that the new Executive uses its new powers in a way which is accountable to Council members.

Both of these factors have meant additions, so how well have we done?

The Rules and Standing Orders to be presented at Lancaster have together around 7,700 words. This is more than the constitutions of The Ringing World (5,300) and CAMRA (6,600) and is the same as the Royal College of Organists (7,700). We are a bantamweight compared with The English Bridge Union, British Cycling and The Ramblers Association (all between 12,000 and 15,300).

Key Features of the Final Edition

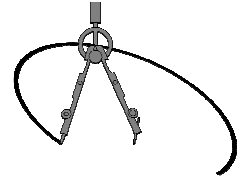
The Third (and final) Edition of the governing documents, incorporating many of the recommendations we have received can now be downloaded from the Central Council's Rules Work pages at <https://cccbr.org.uk/about/reform/rules/>.

This Edition has been sent to the Charity Commission for approval and will be submitted for consideration at the Council's Lancaster meeting. It comprises :-

- The **Rules**.
- The **Standing Orders**
- A **Transition Motion**, defining how the above will be introduced.

The Council's Decisions

The Transition Motion allows the Council's existing **Decisions** (as they may be amended at Lancaster) to be migrated across automatically to become the third part of the rulebook. The important work to review the Council's Decisions may therefore proceed at its own pace with agreed changes applied separately.



Society Constitutions and Representation

It is important to emphasise again that the revised rules will not reduce any society's representation. Some of the more archaic wording is modernised, but these changes will not lead to any reductions.

In future, the Council's triennial system will be retired and societies will be at liberty to choose their Council representatives when they please and for as long as they please. Some society constitutions say something along the lines of "*our Central Council representatives will be chosen every three years in line with the rules of the Central Council*", and the new rulebook incorporates language to support this form of words, meaning that no society should be required to make any changes.

The Path to Reform

With two minor exceptions, the revised rules faithfully incorporate the reforms agreed at the Edinburgh meeting:

CRAG Proposal A – CRAG's Vision and Mission statements are incorporated into the Council's objects in a way that satisfies the Charity Commission rules.

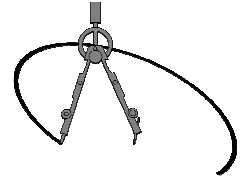
CRAG Proposal B – the Executive of 8 elected people is built-in, with the much wider powers which CRAG gives it.

CRAG Proposal C – The new Executive will be empowered to establish and remove Workgroups as the organisation's needs change, exactly as CRAG envisaged.

CRAG Proposal D – the powers of Council representatives are modified to reflect the greater empowerment which CRAG gives to the Executive. Important checks and balances are in place to ensure that representatives can hold the Executive to account.

CRAG Proposal E – new provisions allow the Executive to create additional classes of non-voting individual member.

The two exceptions, both set out in previous updates, were made in response to feedback during our three consultations. They were first to allow members of the Executive and Workgroup Leaders also to be Society Representatives and secondly to allow an individual appointed to a Council role to serve beyond six years (if agreed at a Council Meeting).



The Right Balance ?

Thanks to the thorough feedback we have received during our consultations and through the work of David Bleby and our Review Panel, we are as confident as we can be that what we have produced is robust, in tune with the Council's values and will be broadly acceptable.

The extent to which the final edition now published differs from the first draft, issued for consultation last October, indicates the length we have travelled and the degree to which the feedback received has rightly influenced the final outcome.

We cannot please everyone on every count, but the 500 or so comments received during our consultations have allowed a broad mix of voices to be heard. As a result, there can be few suggestions which have not already been raised and considered during the drafting process, meaning that the new governing documents are likely to strike the right balance.

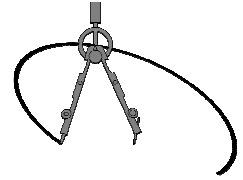
The Road to Lancaster

The new governing documents have now been sent to the Charity Commission for formal approval ahead of the Lancaster meeting. You will have probably seen updates from Christopher O'Mahony, the Council's President on the progress to create a new Executive and Workgroup structure 'in waiting', ready to achieve a smooth transition from the existing Officers and Committees if that is what Council members approve.

If the Lancaster meeting chooses to adopt the new governing documents, then the process is quite simple. Having approved the Transition motion, Council Members will be able to elect the four new Ordinary Trustees in accordance with the Council's existing conventions relating to nominations and elections.

The Council's existing Stewards will continue in office, the Executive will come into being and at the close of the Lancaster meeting and the new Workgroups will take up their responsibilities shortly afterwards.

If the Lancaster meeting concludes that further changes are needed, or that the new governing documents are not what is required, then the meeting will simply proceed to elect replacements for those retiring members of the Administrative Committee, which under the Council's current rules has a fixed membership. All other committees have a variable membership and are empowered to co-opt any additional members they need at any time.



Further Questions or Concerns.

If you have not yet been able to review the rulebook, we have published a **“Frequently Asked Questions”** (FAQ) document on the Rules Work pages, which we hope will resolve most questions which this update cannot cover for reasons of space. We will publish updates to the FAQ document between now and the Lancaster meeting.

If you have a question or concern, we would still value your input and will do our best to answer it. Please email any contributions to constitution@cccbr.org.uk.

A Means to an End

I would like to thank all those who have given their time help us on our way since last August: to everyone who responded to our consultations, to David Bleby, Andrew Wilby and Pat Wheeler, who have formed our Review Panel, Christopher O’Mahony who has been an invaluable mentor and most importantly to Dan Meyer, who did most of the drafting work and to add insult to injury has clocked up over 56 hours in meetings since we started our journey.

Finally, as the main work of the Rules Working Group comes to a close, it’s worth remembering that the revised rules are a means to an end. They set up the foundations for a more agile and responsive Council organisation, better placed to serve ringing and ensure a flourishing future.

They achieve this by removing some of the organisational barriers which have frustrated the Council’s efforts over recent years so as to introduce a more effective form of decision-making, as the proposals submitted at Edinburgh recommended.

But to build upon those foundations and give life to the reforms agreed at Edinburgh will still require busy people to volunteer their time and experience to lead and support the Council’s efforts. It will still require the same enduring values which have guided it in its first 127 years.

As the Council adapts once more to meet the demands of a new age, it will need more and not less of the spirit and enthusiasm which have served it so well in the past.

Coordinator, Rules Working Group