

**Collective responsibility**

The responsibility for the effective management of Mothers’ Union in the diocese lies collectively with the board of trustees, not just the diocesan president or a selected few within the diocese. In Mothers’ Union, some trustees may be elected or appointed for their particular experience or expertise. However, all trustees are equally responsible for all decisions made by the board, not just those relating to their area of interest.

# Expressing views

In board meetings, you should feel able to voice your opinion without fear of repercussions. It is inevitable that there will be different views on some topics and this should be encouraged as diverse opinions contribute to effective decision making. You are entitled to express your opinion, so don’t feel pressurised into keeping quiet to keep the majority happy or to please others. Where there is disagreement, the diocesan president/chair should allow for different opinions to be heard, discussed and recorded.

# Confidentiality

To foster an environment where trustees feel able to contribute fully and openly during meetings, it is vital that discussions which lead to a decision remain confidential. Therefore, you should not talk about the content of discussions, or the individual contributions of other trustees, with anyone.

# Decision making

The trustee board as a whole is responsible for decisions that are carried by a majority vote. As a trustee, you are bound by the decisions of the board, even if you abstained, voted against a decision, or were absent from the meeting. If you strongly disagree with a decision, you can request that your disagreement is recorded in the minutes. If you think that a decision has been made that doesn’t comply with the law or your governing documents, you should raise this with your diocesan president or fellow trustees. If you are still concerned, you should contact Mary Sumner House.

In board meetings, it is up to the trustees to decide whether voting is conducted openly or secretly, and both methods should be respected. If decisions are contentious, secret voting is advisable to protect individual trustees. Some trustees will find it easier to convey their decision in a closed forum.

If decisions need to be made that involve a significant impact on the direction or activities of Mothers’ Union in the diocese, you should be given sufficient time to understand, discuss and reach a conclusion. Papers should be circulated at least a week in advance so you can read and fully comprehend the issues under consideration. During the meeting, there should be enough time for the topic to be fully discussed and everyone given the opportunity to air their views.

# Taking advice

If the trustee board is not confident about taking a decision in a particular area because of a lack of knowledge or expertise, the reasonable and practical action is to take advice from an appropriate source. This could include officers who are not trustees, for example, your diocesan treasurer, or staff at Mary Sumner House.