

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Annual General Meeting 2026

Summary of changes to Operating Procedures, May 2026

Following consultation with the Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Council (and, via them, congregations), the Trustees and the Ecumenical Oversight Group for Milton Keynes have agreed changes to the Partnership's governance and management structures, and consequently the Operating Procedures that describe them.

The SEP AGM is asked to approve the structural changes outlined in paragraphs 1 to 4 below and note other, non-structural, adjustments to our Operating Procedures listed in paragraph 5.

A copy of the full document is available on request from the secretary to the Trustees at sep.trustee.secretary@gmail.com and will be published on the Partnership website following the AGM. All changes will be implemented from the date of the AGM.

Structural changes for ratification

1. The Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership Council (SEPC) will be disbanded with its responsibilities being shared between the Trustees and the Partnership Leadership Team. A new Consultative Group is being created to ensure congregation opinions are taken into account in strategic development and other major changes.

The former responsibilities of the SEPC, Partnership Leadership Team and the Trustees will be shared as follows:

Previous SEPC responsibility	Goes to Leadership Team	Goes to Trustees
Strategic direction of SEP (delegated by Trustees)	Development of strategy; consultative body to be consulted before presentation to Trustees	Approval
Setting the policies of SEP (delegated by Trustees)	Policy development (with consultation as appropriate)	Approval
Overseeing communications between denominations, any city-wide ecumenical body, and congregations within the Partnership (delegated by Trustees)	Delegated by Trustees to this leadership team	Oversee activities only
Implementing policies and activities to achieve agreed objectives	Responsible for implementation and overseeing congregational implementation (This will include considering regular reports on safeguarding. The team will also	Receives reports

	receive finance updates but Trustees remain responsible for financial decisions and oversight).	
Creating sub-committees or groups for specific functions	Will set up informal small project teams, role huddles etc. Could choose to co-opt project leaders to leadership team for a period.	Will set up any formal sub-committees.
Appointing the SEP Ministers' Team Leader	Consulted by Trustees	Approve (or approve appointment process with relevant denomination)
Agreeing with relevant denominational appointing authority the Lead Minister for a congregation, in consultation with Partnership Leadership Team and congregation(s)	Consulted by Trustees	Approve after consultation with ministers and leadership team.
Agreeing the expected Pattern of meetings throughout SEP (Church Meeting, Ministry Team meetings, Congregational Leadership Meetings, Congregational Gatherings)	Co-ordinate	Oversee effectiveness
Delegating powers to Congregational Leadership Teams	Remove (leadership team may ask CLTs to do things but not delegate as such)	Remove

2. The Partnership Leadership Team membership is slightly adjusted and will now be:

Ex officio

- 1) Every minister duly appointed by one or more of the Participating Denominations to the ministry team of the LEP [i.e. the members of the Core Ministry Team, see Note 6a].
- 2) Two Church Officers from each congregation (i.e. the two people holding the combined role of Anglican Churchwardens, Baptist Deacons, Methodist Stewards and United Reformed Church Elders – see Congregational Leadership Teams below). If no Church Officer from a congregation is able to attend a meeting, they are required to send another member of the CLT to the meeting.
- 3) The SEP Treasurer.

Elected

A lay co-chair, elected by the Annual General Meeting (for a three year term).

In attendance (i.e. invited to attend and contribute but not voting members)

- 4) All those approved ministers in the Partnership, including retired clergy and lay ministers, who are not members of the Partnership Leadership Team.
 - 5) The preaching /worship plan co-ordinator from a congregation, if not already a member, may attend PLT meetings if they wish.
 - 6) Any Trustee not otherwise a member may attend if they wish.
3. The Consultation Group will be made up of 2 representatives from each congregation, usually members who do not hold another office in their congregation or the Partnership. It will be chaired by one of the representatives, to be elected by the Group. This will be the congregational voice in strategic development and new initiatives or ideas. They will have at least one in person meeting per year, but could be called to meet at any time. Reps will be expected to consult with their congregation on any item of business, so sufficient time will need to be allowed by PLT for this.
 4. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the Parish of Stantonbury and Willen PCC (i.e. the Anglican element of the Partnership) will meet in person at least once a year and now otherwise is expected to conduct most of its business by correspondence (email). It has also been made clear that the PCC generally discusses Anglican-only business and Church of England requirements for membership are set out, rather than being available only by a link.

5. Non-structural changes for information

- a. Ministers' titles - Clarification of the terms "lead minister" and "ministry team" as these were used in varying ways in the original Operating Procedures. Lead Minister is now clearly reserved for the role with pastoral charge of an individual congregation, e.g. Christ Church's Lead Minister is Phil Dunning.
The phrase Core Ministry Team is now used for the group of ministers appointed by their denomination to serve in the Partnership (in the current arrangements, Phil, Sam, Peterson, Kofi and Team Rector). The word "Core" has been added to differentiate this team from the wider group that includes licensed lay preachers, retired ministers. Ministers in this Core Ministry Team who do not hold a Lead Minister role will generally be referred to in any literature by the role title to which they were appointed, e.g. Associate Minister.
- b. The section of the Operating Procedures on the Methodist Church Council now sets out, based on the Methodist written requirements, how this Council would be formed in the SEP should we have Methodist-only business to conduct, e.g. in relation to a building. Previously, the Procedures only

provided a link to the central Methodist information.

- c. Congregational Leadership Teams – addition to clarify that, in addition to the Lead Minister plus any other assigned Core Ministry Team member and 6 other expected lay members, other congregation members may be invited to attend meetings as needed.
- d. Election procedure – addition to clarify that, in the case of uncontested nominations, as long as they have been nominated and seconded correctly, the person is elected unopposed. Contested elections are usually voted on by secret ballot. Also that votes on other matters are usually taken by show of hands.
- e. Pattern of meetings – adjustment of anticipated timings of meetings to reflect the AGM being in May.
- f. Membership – adjustment to wording to cover the potential for baptised Christians whose previous tradition is aligned with the Churches Together in England statement of belief to join the Partnership (not just those whose tradition is in a denomination which actually joined Churches Together). Also to note that members may choose to join as ecumenical rather than identifying themselves solely with one denomination, even if they have been baptised into a particular denomination.
- g. Clarification that the Church of England Annual Parochial Church Meeting and Annual Meeting of Parishioners, and any formal Church-wide meetings required by other denominations, will be held at the same time as the AGM.
- h. Trustee terms of office – clarification that vacancies arising between meetings will be filled for the remainder of the retiring trustee's appointment period in order to keep the pattern of rotation in place and will be considered a full term when calculating total service.
- i. Trustee minutes – adjustment to reflect practice that these are available on a password-protected section of the SEP website and the password is available to members on request.
- j. Trustees will also be working with Congregation Leadership Teams to clarify a paragraph within the Trustees mode of operation (set out in Appendix 2 of the Operating Procedures) which sets out which proposals for expenditure need to be approved by Trustees.

Stantonbury Ecumenical Partnership structures May 2026

