



Proposed changes to the admin required of Centre Councils

CIWM Volunteer Strategy 2024

Background

Over the last two years CIWM has been investigating alternative options for delivering our volunteering experience to increase the benefits of volunteering both for the volunteers and the members. As part of this the Volunteer Strategy Steering Group have looked at all elements of the volunteering offer including the structures and processes that support it. This document outlines changes to one of those areas.

Any changes to the structures or processes which are outlined in CIWM Practice Directions can be changed by the CIWM Trustee Board (General Council). Any changes to the structures or processes which are outlined in other parts of the CIWM Constitution will be subject to a vote by members at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

What current administration is required of Centre Councils?

In order to carry out their role volunteers in Centre Councils complete a variety of administration tasks. Many of these they can flex, to reflect the skills they have in the Centre Council and the priorities of members in the region. There are some tasks which are specified in the CIWM Constitution and it is these activities which are the focus of the proposed changes. These are specified in Part II of the Regulations.

Centre Annual General Meetings

Every Centre must hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) by 30 April each year. The purpose of this meeting is to present an annual report from the Centre Council to the members of the centre, presentation of the Centres annual accounts for approval by the members and announcement of the Elected Centre Councillors to the membership. The Centre AGM also includes an update from the Members' Council. (Often other activities are also presented at the AGM such as a report from the CIWM policy and technical team on the work of the previous year and an update from the CIWM President, CEO or Trustees. These activities are not required in the constitution.)

The Centre Secretary is responsible for making all AGM arrangements and is supported by the CIWM staff team who help to ensure that all communications are sent to members and that the requirements of the constitution are fulfilled.

Minutes of Centre Council meetings

The constitution requires that Centre Councils complete minutes of each Centre Council meeting and that these are sent to the CEO.



Finance

The Treasurer must manage the Centre bank account, maintain a record of Centre income and expenditure and, at the end of the year, produce an annual financial statement of the Centre to be examined and ratified by two Chartered Members in the region who are not Centre Councillors.

Why is a change recommended?

From the feedback gathered by the Volunteer Strategy Steering Group, some of these administrative tasks are taking a significant amount of volunteer and staff time but providing little value for members.

Centre AGMs tend to be poorly attended with centres occasionally having to call individual members on the day of the AGM to ensure that they are quorate. Often the documents required from volunteers take a significant amount of time to produce when the number of members who engage with them are considered. With ten Centre AGMs, each run as individual face to face or online events this takes a significant amount of both staff and volunteer time, restricting other activities that can take place in the first quarter of the year. Since AGMs have to be promoted to members as ten individual events it also restricts promotion of other activities to members.

The requirement to have the annual financial statement audited by members in the centre provides no benefit to members and centres often find it difficult to find members who are happy to undertake this role.

Many Centre Councils have already moved to action lists rather than formal minutes for Centre Council meetings due to the significant time it takes to create minutes. The CEO is informed of the discussions of Centre Councils directly by the Centre Chairs, as part of the Centre Chair meetings, and by staff who attended the meetings - so there is no need for Centre Council minutes.

What are the suggested changes?

Centre Councils will no longer be required to have an Annual General Meeting. Centre Councils may choose to provide an annual update meeting to the members in their centre if they feel it will provide value to members.

Each year all Centre Councillor appointments will end on 30 April. By 30 May each year an update will be sent to members informing them of their Centre Councillors. (Centre Councillors will still be appointed using the current processes, usually with a three year term.)

The Centre Council annual report will form a more significant part of the overall CIWM annual report. Highlights of activities of Centre Councils will also feature in the CIWM Annual General Meeting with additional information from each Centre Council, for example in the form of a video from the Centre Chair, available online.

Centres will no longer be required to have their accounts audited by members in the region, instead the CIWM staff team will undertake this activity and we will no longer ask the members to approve the accounts of the centre.



The requirement for minutes will be removed and will be replaced with the requirement to maintain an up to date record of actions from Centre Council meetings which will be shared with members in the region via an upload to the website.

What are the benefits of these changes?

- Removes low value administrative burden from the Centre Councils allowing them to focus on activities which are more valuable to members.
- Makes Centre Council roles more attractive as they are less focused on formal governance and administration.
- Frees up promotion time to allow more coverage of activities more highly valued by members.
- Provides coverage of Centre Council activities across the regions by including them in the main CIWM AGM which is promoted to all members.
- Makes better use of staff time by having one central AGM rather than eleven AGMs

What are the risks with these changes and how will these be mitigated?

The Centre AGMs provide a point of oversight and accountability for Centre Councils to members in their region and offer an engagement point for Members - for some AGMs the only attendees are Centre Councillors and so this is not providing member oversight. Additional changes proposed in the Volunteer Strategy will provide more ways for members to input and feedback into activities of their Centre Council. More support to Centre Councils will also provide more guidance and checks on Centre Council activities. Centre Councils are also subject to oversight from other structures including the Trustee Board (General Council). By rolling the annual updates into other activities and combining the messages we send to members we should reach more people. Other changes proposed in the volunteer strategy will also provide more coverage of Centre Councillors and Centre Council activities.

By not having Centre Council minutes there is less oversight of Centre Council meetings and discussions – the CEO and Trustees are updated on the discussions at Centre Council meetings via other routes with there often being a Trustee and member of staff at Centre Council meetings.

How can I feedback my views on these proposals?

Views can be emailed to volunteers@ciwm.co.uk and these will then be shared with the steering group when they meet in December 2024.

What are the next steps?

Once the Volunteer Strategy Steering Group have completed the consultation process they will determine whether to proceed with the proposals or to change them. Once the proposals are agreed these will either be planned for implementation or, if they require a vote of the members, an Extraordinary General Meeting will be held.