



**Bedford Morison and Cordery Alms-house
Charity**

Dame Mary Morison Apprenticeship Trust

**BEDFORD, MORISON & CORDERY ALMSHOUSE CHARITY
DAME MARY MORISON APPRENTICESHIP TRUST**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

***Bedford Morison and Cordery Alms-house Charity, Watford, was established in 1580
England and Wales Charity Registration number: 207042***

Dame Mary Morison Apprenticeship Trust

***Established 6 April 1629 to aid and assist young persons (poor children of the Town and
Parish of Watford) during their educational years***

England and Wales Charity Registration number: 312129

Registered Office: 19 St Mary's Close, Watford, WD18 0EQ

Approved by Trustees June 2025

The Bedford, Morison and Cordery Alms-houses in the middle of Watford are the oldest inhabited buildings in the town. The Alms-houses were opened on 21st February 1580 by Francis, 2nd Earl of Bedford and his wife, Lady Bridget former wife of Sir Richard Morison, as homes for eight poor women from the Ancient Parishes Watford, Chenies and Langley. In 1952 they were nationally listed - Grade II.

In 1960's four Almshouses in Vicarage Road (the Cordery Almshouses) and six in Sutton Road (The Cordery Almshouses) were demolished and in compensation a red brick block of studio flats erected opposite the eight cottages. They provide 19 units set around a garden space, one of which is used as office space and meeting rooms (Number 19).

Dame Mary Morison also set up an apprenticeship trust by deed dated 6th April 1629 to aid and assist young persons (poor children of the Town and Parish of Watford) during their educational years and grants are awarded to individuals annually.

Introduction

1.1 The Trustee Board of the Bedford Morison and Cordery Alms-house Charity (BMC Charity) and Dame Mary Morison Apprenticeship Trust takes its authority and its responsibilities from two sources:

- a. Under the Charities Act 1993 the Trustees of a charity are "*the people responsible under the charity's governing document for controlling the management and administration of the charity, regardless of what they are called*". Charity law lays a number of specific duties on all charity Trustees, which are reflected in these Terms of Reference. In essence these are:
 - A duty of compliance with the charity's objectives, its governing documents and all relevant legislation and regulation.
 - A duty of care, to ensure that the charity is well run and efficient and that professional advice is sought in order to manage risk.
 - A duty of prudence in respect of managing the charity's assets.
- b. The Scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales dated *October 1960* (the Constitution) which sets out who may become a Trustee of the charity, how Trustees are appointed and their powers.

1.2 The Constitution as lodged with the Charity Commission on 7 *October 1960* allows for nine Trustees, each to serve a four/five year term which may be renewed.

The Trustees comprise:

- One ex officio Trustee The Vicar of St Mary's Church Watford
- Four nominated Trustees (four year term)
 - Three Trustees nominated by Watford Borough Council
 - One Trustees nominated by Watford Parish Council
- Four co-opted Trustees persons residing or carrying on business in or near the Borough of Watford (five year term)

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities for Trustees will be agreed annually at the Annual General Meeting, in particular

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer

Responsibilities

- Buildings (Maintenance and Repairs)
- Liaison with Residents
- Safeguarding
- Communications (Website and Newsletter)
- Fund raising
- Minutes Secretary

1.4 The overall responsibility of the Trustee Board is to provide direction and stewardship for the BMC Charity for the benefit of current and future users, by:

- a. Setting the vision, mission, values, and strategic direction of the charity.
- b. Monitoring and communicating performance against the strategy, and its impact upon stakeholders.
- c. Acting as the guardians of the charity's assets, both tangible and intangible, taking all due care over their security, deployment, and proper application.
- d. Ensuring that the charity complies with all constitutional, legal, and regulatory requirements.
- e. Ensuring that the charity's governance is of the highest possible standard.

Main duties

Strategic direction

2.1 The Trustees work in partnership to ensure that:

- a. The constitution and rules that govern the charity, remain fit for purpose (reviewed at least every three years).
- b. There is regular review of the need for the charity and for the services it provides or could provide, and regular review of strategic plans and priorities.

- c. The charity has a clear vision, mission, set of values and forward plans, and that there is a common understanding of these by Trustees, staff and stakeholders.
- d. Annual budgets, and fundraising to support the vision, mission and forward plan.
- e. The views of current users are regularly sought and considered in developing forward plans and delivering services.
- f. There is regular review of the external environment for changes that might affect the charity (environmental, political, financial, competitive, partnerships, alliances).

Performance management

2.2 The Trustees are responsible for the performance of the charity, for its impact upon beneficiaries and other stakeholders, by:

- a. Agreeing the mechanisms for measuring the charity's impact and progress towards its vision, mission and objectives, business plans and annual budgets, and regularly considering reports on the charity's performance.
- b. Ensuring that there are policies and position statements to direct key areas of the charity's business.
- c. Ensuring that there are quality and service standards for major areas of delivery and that these are met.
- d. Ensuring that the major risks to the charity are regularly identified and reviewed and that systems are in place to mitigate or minimise these risks.
- e. Ensuring that there is an effective complaint system in place, for users and stakeholders.
- f. Ensuring that there are processes for Trustees, staff and volunteers to report activity which might compromise the effectiveness and reputation of the charity.
- g. An on-going process to hold the Chair and other Trustees to account for the management and administration of the charity and formally as part of the annual General Meeting
- h. Ensuring that the charity has effective employment policies and processes in place, to recruit, train and develop staff.

Finance and assets

- 2.3 The Trustees act as the guardians of the charity's finances and other assets by:
- a. Ensuring that the charity's financial obligations are met and that there are adequate financial controls in place to ensure all money due is received and properly applied, and that all assets and liabilities are recorded and that expenditure is subject to due diligence.
 - b. Acting reasonably and prudently in all matters relating to the charity and always in the interests of the charity.
 - c. Ensuring that there is an effective fundraising strategy in place.
 - d. Being accountable for the solvency of the charity.
 - e. Reviewing the condition and use of the properties and land owned by the charity.
 - f. Ensuring that intangible assets such as organisational knowledge and expertise, intellectual property, the charity's brand, good name and reputation are recognised, used and safeguarded.

Compliance

- 2.4 The Trustees must:
- a. Ensure, with professional advice as appropriate, that the charity complies with all constitutional, legal, regulatory and statutory requirements.
 - b. Ensure the charity complies with health and safety standards as regards its staff, volunteers and when putting on events.
 - c. Understand and comply with the constitution and regulations that govern the charity.

Governance

- 2.5 The Trustees aim for the highest possible standard of governance by ensuring that:
- a. The charity has a governance framework that is appropriate to a charity of its size/ complexity, stage of development, and its charitable objects, and reflects the diversity of its users. That this framework is regularly reviewed, along with the Board's performance.
 - b. In consultation with the Chair, the Board has the mix of skills and experience it requires to govern the charity well, and that the Board has access to, and considers, relevant external professional advice and expertise.

- c. Major decisions and policies are made by the Trustees acting collectively, and that Board decisions are recorded in writing by means of minutes.
- d. The Board's delegated authority is recorded by terms of reference for board committees, job descriptions for honorary officers, Trustees and key staff, and that reporting procedures back to the Board are recorded in writing and complied with.
- e. The responsibilities delegated to the Chair are clearly expressed and understood, and directions given to him/ her come from the Board as a whole.
- f. There is a systematic, open, and fair procedure for recruitment of Trustees and of the Chair.
- g. All members of the Board receive appropriate induction on their appointment and that they continue to receive appropriate advice, information and training (both individual and collective).
- h. Trustees have a code of conduct and comply with it, and that there are mechanisms for the removal of Trustees who do not abide by the Trustee code of conduct.
- i. In carrying out the above duties, professional advice is taken when necessary, and the advice received is recorded.

Meetings

- 3.1 The Trustee Board will meet usually 4 times (and a minimum of 3) in any calendar year. There shall be an AGM each year.
- 3.2 The constitution sets out the following requirements
 - There shall be at least two ordinary meetings in each year
 - A special meeting may be summoned at any time by the Chair and two Trustees giving four days' notice
 - The meeting is quorate when four Trustees are present
 - The Chairman is elected annually at the AGM
 - Nominated Trustees are appointed for a term of four year
 - Co-opted Trustees are appointed for a term of five years
 - Trustees should sign a declaration of acceptance and willingness to act as a Trustee
 - Any Trustee who is absent from all meetings during a period of one year, who is adjudged bankrupt or makes a composition or arrangement with his creditors, who is incapacitated from acting or communicates to the Trustees a wish to resign shall cease thereupon to be a Trustee
- 3.3 The Bursar, Site Manager, and such other members of staff as the Chair may require, shall attend meetings.

- 3.4 Any member of the Board unable to attend should inform the Chair or Vice-Chair prior to the meeting. If a Board member is unable to attend the possibility of attending remotely will be explored.
- 3.5 If the Chair is absent from the meeting, the Vice-Chair will act as Chair for the proceedings. In the absence of both Chair and Vice-Chair, a Trustee will be selected by those present to act as chair for the proceedings.
- 3.6 The agenda will be drawn up by Minutes Secretary in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair.
- 3.7 The Minutes Secretary will provide and circulate the agenda and supporting documents to Trustees at least one week prior to the meeting. Draft minutes of Board meetings will also be circulated for approval at the next meeting of Trustees.
- 3.8 Every matter shall be determined by the majority of votes of the Trustees present and voting on the question. In case of equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting shall have a casting vote-whether he/she has or has not voted previously on the same question but no Trustee in any other circumstances shall give more than one vote.
- 3.9 The Trustees shall have full power from time to time to make regulations for the management of the Charity and for the conduct of their business including the summoning of meetings, the deposit of money at a proper bank and the custody of documents.
- 3.10 The Chair and Trustees will be responsible for communicating the proceedings of the Trustee Board to staff, advisory bodies and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Charitable objectives

Bedford, Morison and Cordery Alms-house Charity

Comprising 1) **The Earl and Countess of Bedford's Almshouse Charity**
2) **The Almshouse Charity of Dorothy Lady Morison and others**
3) **Frederick and Ada Cordery Almshouses**

- 4.1 The eight cottages shall be known as the Bedford Almshouses, the studio flats shall be known as Cordery Almshouses with two being called Morison Almshouses (replacing those demolished in 1960s)
- 4.2 The Almshouses from time to time belonging to the Charity shall be appropriated and used for the residence of almspeople, being poor persons of good character from the Ancient Parishes of Chenies and Langley, and of Watford.

Dame Mary Morrison Apprenticeship Trust

- 4.3 An apprenticeship trust to aid and assist young persons (poor children of the Town and Parish of Watford) during their educational years
- 4.4 The income of the Charity should be applied, as far as this is possible in present day circumstances, in accordance with the trusts mentioned in the grant made by the Foundress, Dame Mary Morison, on 6 April 1629. Thus, the Trustees can use the money in any way they can think of to assist the children of Watford to enter a trade, profession or calling or otherwise to earn their own living.
- 4.5 Decisions regarding allocation of grant funding will be made and agreed by the Trustee Board.

This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees:

Name: Felicity Evans MBE, Chair of Trustees

Date: 10 June 2025