



The Co-operative Funeral Service Managers' Association (CFSMA)

An Introduction

The CFSMA is a constituent association of the National Association of Co-operative Officials (NACO) and as such doubles up in function as a trade union for funeral managers working within the Co-operative movement, whilst also being regarded by many as a trade association. The CFSMA is run in conjunction with a rule book which explains entitlement to membership and can be accessed by visiting the NACO website: www.naco.coop/cfsma

The Association is made up of six divisional committees, elected representatives from which make up the National Executive Committee. The divisional committees are as follows:

- Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Northern
- North West/North East
- Midlands
- Southern
- West/South West

Divisional meetings are held three times a year, typically in November (Divisional AGM and first triannual meeting), March and July. Meetings are usually held in funeral homes operated by members' employing Societies. The agenda for meetings covers a range of issues such as updates on membership, health & safety issues, reports from the National Executive, reports from other divisions and NACO, and a wide range of issues affecting members.

Contact names for divisional secretaries are listed on the NACO website and their respective contact numbers can be obtained from NACO Office.

Besides those benefits enjoyed by being a member of NACO, the benefits of membership of CFSMA and attendance at meetings are numerous and include:

- Opportunities to network with fellow members, sharing best practice and experiences
- Opportunities to meet with and be updated by NACO Officials on employment matters such as pay, fringe benefits, working conditions etc.
- Access to continuous professional development by attendance at conference and/or divisional meetings
- The opportunity to stand for election onto the National Executive and ultimately to become National President

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The following is intended to clarify just what is involved in the various roles within CFSMA. It is hoped this will encourage members to pursue active roles within the Association with a clear understanding of what they would be undertaking. As with most organisations, CFSMA has to constantly review its objectives and such reviews may impact upon the nature of the roles outlined.

Divisional Chairperson

Elected each year by the members of the respective division, the role of the Chairperson includes:

- Chairing meetings and exercising a casting vote where appropriate
- Liaising with Divisional Secretary between meetings
- Encouraging and controlling discussion and debate in meetings
- Attending Executive meetings if Divisional Executive Representative and Divisional Secretary are unavailable
- Representing the division at funerals of members/retired members as appropriate

A key role within the Division, it is important that the Chair attends each divisional meeting. A vice chair may be elected to stand in on occasions when the Chair is unable to attend.

Divisional Secretary

Elected each year by the members of the respective division, the role of the Secretary includes:

- Co-ordinate divisional meetings & CPD sessions liaising with the Chair, notifying members and NACO officials well in advance, producing agenda for meetings and seeking nominations for available positions ahead of elections at divisional AGM
- Produce minutes promptly and circulate to members and National Secretary
- Liaise with NACO office and National Secretary regarding new members, resignations, retirements and transfers, inviting new members to meetings and ensuring they are made welcome
- Onward communication of correspondence from NACO Office on various relevant issues
- Attending Executive meetings if Divisional Executive Representative is unavailable

A key role within the Division, it is important that the Secretary attends each meeting. A vice secretary may be elected to stand in on occasions when the Secretary is unable to attend.

Divisional Executive Representative

- The Executive Representative holds a privileged and key responsibility in ensuring the divisional members' interests are registered at National Executive meetings and that the division is updated on the National Executive's activities.
- Although elected each year, it is desirable (though not essential) that the Executive Representative stands for re-election and ultimately progresses into officio positions (2nd Vice, 1st Vice and then National President). A number of years serving on the National Executive ensures a good understanding of who's who and what's what so to speak.
- The elected Executive Representative should be a trusted and regular attending member who will be capable of registering members' interests and influencing the strategic direction of the association through the National Executive's leadership of the Association.

National Secretary

Appointed by the National Executive, essentially, the National Secretary is to the National Executive what a Divisional Secretary is to the respective division. Additional responsibilities include

- Co-ordinating National Executive meetings and ensuring minutes are taken and distributed amongst Executive members
- Again, whilst not essential, it is desirable that the National Secretary serves for a number of years, since the National Secretary advises the National President and Executive on protocol at meetings, AGM and Conference.
- Divisional Secretaries feed divisional minutes through the National Secretary who summarises all the divisional minutes and includes them within his/her report to the National Executive.
- NACO Office forwards membership applications to the National Secretary who in turn forwards applications to the National Executive for their approval ahead of forwarding to divisional secretaries for approval by the respective division.
- The National Secretary liaises between NACO Office and the Executive and updates members attending the AGM on the National Executive's activities throughout the year.
- This role demands regular attendance at National Executive meetings and the AGM and often requires some work between meetings.

Education Representative

The CFSMA has always held education as a top priority for its members, so this is a most important role within the Association. Another position appointed by the National Executive, its purpose is to co-ordinate educational activities. This includes

- Co-ordinating continuous professional development within the Association
- Advising the National Executive on relevant education matters
- Advising on educational content for the annual conference
- Co-ordinating a range of suitable continuous professional development sessions and topics for divisional meetings
- Liaising with other organisations such as Co-operative College, Co-operative Funeral Services Association on educational matters and reporting back to the National Executive.
- This role demands regular attendance at National Executive meetings and the AGM and often requires some work between meetings.
- Reporting to membership at the Annual General Meeting

2nd Vice President & 1st Vice President

Ideally, having served a number of years on the National Executive, 2nd and 1st Vice Presidents essentially continue their roles as National Executive representatives, but will start planning for their terms of office as National President including planning a conference. As they take up officio roles, new vacancies become available for Divisional Representatives, ensuring future presidents continue to come forward.

National President

Ideally having served a number of years on the National Executive and having gained a good understanding of the dynamics of the Association, the National President is elected by members at the AGM, usually progressing from Divisional Representative to 2nd vice, 1st vice and then National President. Holding office as National President is a great privilege and not to be taken lightly. Responsibilities include:

- Leading and Chairing the National Executive at meetings, ensuring the Executive are acting for the good of the CFSMA membership as a whole.
- Chairing the Annual General Meeting
- Hosting an annual conference at the end of his/her term in office. This involves assembling and leading a conference committee ensuring the conference provides valuable education sessions for members and culminating in a handover of the chain of office to the incoming National President
- Leading the Executive in strategic reviews from time to time in the interest of the long term future of the Association. This often demands taking difficult decisions in response to changes within the co-operative movement.
- Attending divisional meetings. It is desirable for the National President to attend each division at least once in his/her term of office, communicating directly with the membership and responding to feedback on the National Executive's activities, conferences, and the needs of the Association at large.
- Representing the Association at the funerals of members/retired members and where possible visiting members/retired members who are ill.
- Representing the Association at kindred association conferences, dinners, meetings etc. This is where a great sense of privilege is most enjoyed. The National President of CFSMA is universally respected and arguably the magnificent presidential chain is commensurate with the esteem with which the office of CFSMA President is held. One only needs to look at some of the names of past presidents inscribed on the chain to realise this.

Immediate Past President

Following the term of office as National President, a further term is served on the National Executive as Immediate Past President. Responsibilities include:

- Advising the National Executive. It is likely that the Immediate Past President is the longest serving member of the Executive and therefore well placed to advise the National President and the National Executive on protocol and any number of issues.
- Deputising for the National President in his/her absence. Whilst some organisations put forward their 1st Vice President to deputise for the President, CFSMA has traditionally opted for the Immediate Past President to stand in for an absent president.

It is hoped this explanation of roles will clarify the responsibilities of various roles within CFSMA and encourage members to engage at higher levels than simple membership of the Association. If you want to know more, why not ask the National President or any member of the National Executive?