

**SE Annual District Meeting
7th December 2024**

GMC Report

The SE District elected four District representatives on the GMC at last year's ADM (with one vacancy remaining unfilled). The elected representatives were Stephen Christian, Mary Garner, Jenny Scase and James Smith. There were three GMC meetings in 2024. Two of your representatives were able to attend all three meetings, apologies were sent by one representative for one meeting and by one for two. Meeting Agendas and Minutes are published on the Guild website.

GMC meetings discuss matters of Guild policy and administration, as well as other matters raised by members. Discussions of particular interest during 2024 have included:

- **Safeguarding** - it is not always clear how responsibilities fall between incumbents, Parish Safeguarding Officers and towers. A basic level of safeguarding awareness is needed by all. On a broader note, safeguarding is not just about children, respect for others is essential in all ringing activities.
- **Training Bells** - the GMC has agreed to give grant support to the Training Bells project at St Mary le Tower, Ipswich. The grant was from the Golden Bottle Fund. Separately, the rules for making grants are to be reviewed in case amendment is needed.
- **Restorations** - the GMC has received progress updates on restoration projects under way.
- **Copyright** - the Guild had to pay for an accidental copyright breach, a link on the website to a copyright image (not even the image itself). The amount eventually paid was far lower than the initial demand but it is a reminder to be careful when posting on websites.
- **Conflicts of interest** - the Guild doesn't currently have a policy on conflicts of interest, and this is now to be looked at. A good discussion identified some of the practical issues that a proposed policy for a volunteer organisation like the Guild would need to address, where Guild officers making decisions for the Guild have had involvement in bell projects that the Guild supports financially. Officers frequently have contact with projects at all stages, without necessarily creating conflicts of interest.
- **Church closures** - the GMC received a report on the risk of church closures and threats to bells, presented to Central Council and based on Lincolnshire, and is following up the possibility of research on the risk of church closure in Suffolk.
- **Central Council affiliation fees** - these are going to increase, to fund the Central Council's activities.

The GMC is a valuable forum for discussion and information sharing. Members are encouraged to raise issues with District representatives for airing at GMC, and to consider standing themselves for this role.