

The President
Sri Guru Singh Sabha
2-8 Park Avenue
Southall
Middlesex UB1 3AG

Your Ref:
Our Ref BKC/SGSS/1/CNSTN/2016/01

9th March 2015

Dear Sir

Re: Apparent proposals to effect amendments to the Constitution of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Registered Charity No. 280707)

I write with reference to the above as I understand that the subject Constitution is currently being reviewed for amendment. As you know this is a matter over which I and many of my fellow Sabha members have a keen interest and hence, I would like to make some suggestions to strengthen the integrity of our esteemed institution.

Kindly consider the following please: -

1. Formation of a Scrutiny Committee (SC)

A scrutiny committee should convene every six to eight weeks to review matters such as (but not limited to) Sabha costs, conflicts of interests of EC members and any Sabha employees and / or sub-contractors, issues affecting the congregation and any matters of complaint, plus of course any other business. The SC to include life members of the Sabha.

2. Prohibition on Political office bearers (of any party allegiance) to be members of the Sabha's EC

It is submitted that elected councilors and / or other office bearers of political parties could use the vast membership / congregation base of the Sabha to gain advantage for themselves and / or their aligned parties, if they were to be elected to the Sabha's EC. The Sabha's integrity is preserved only if it remains non-partisan and if politicians are to be invited to the Sabha's stage particularly during election time, then such invitations should be equally extended, without fear or favor. However, fear and favor exists if the host/s are officials of political parties or councilors etc..

3. Proposed Salaried Appointments of *Chief Operating Officer* and *Finance Director*

It is commendable that despite the Sabha's exponential growth, office bearers of the EC remain committed to honorary service. However, it is submitted that it is no longer in the best interests of the Sabha that such onerous roles as Hon. General Secretary and Hon. Treasurer be maintained as before, as inevitably requisite due diligence is impaired.

Therefore, it is proposed that these roles be supported by the appointment of two new **paid** officers, they being a *Chief Operating Officer (COO)* and a *Finance Director (FD)*. Recruits to both positions should be qualified as per the requirements of the respective roles and the salaries should be commensurate with the duties set and competitive in the marketplace so that high calibre candidates are attracted. The COO would report directly to the Hon. General Secretary and the FD to the Treasurer, but both senior officers would be accountable to members of the EC and indeed the whole membership of the Sabha. I suggest that this would ensure that the Sabha would satisfy good practice obligations relating to accountability, transparency and indeed integrity. As it stands, honorary officers, can be excused due to the fact that they are unable to devote sufficient time to the Sabha's affairs as there is only so much time they can voluntarily expend due to the demands of their personal lives and / or careers.

4. Maximum term for Sabha office bearers.

It is submitted that the democratic environment of which we are a part dictates that it is right and proper for office bearers to serve no more than a set period of office, for example a maximum of eight years. Indeed the recent controversy over how charities operated, highlighted this issue and Sir Stephen Bubb, CEO of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations commented that it was not good practice for the same honorary officers to remain in office indefinitely. We are obliged to continually learn and improve and I submit that this change would ensure that in the years to come our Sabha's interest will always be paramount.

Further, with reference to the proposed constitutional amendments as outlined in a draft document currently in circulation and which I have reviewed, I have some comments and would be obliged for your consideration in the following please: -

5. Re: Clause 11.1 – CRB Checks

I believe that the issue of CRB checks has been grossly misconstrued from past; when originally this idea was floated and thereafter introduced, the intention of the respective authorities was to ensure that people who **regularly** have contact or who are **regularly involved** with people considered vulnerable, such as children, elderly folk, those with disabilities etc. need to be vetted to prove their fitness for such positions. EC members do not necessarily have such contact and in fact the regulatory requirement is for those who work (inc. volunteers) at the Sabha to be CRB checked, as they mix with vulnerable people for many hours each and every day, whereas EC members tend not to have such close involvement as their roles are more managerial. Therefore, requiring EC members or prospective EC members to have clean records does not ensure that the Sabha is compliant with the respective regulations; it is the people who regularly have contact with vulnerable people who need to be CRB checked and only then will the Sabha be compliant, which as per current practice the Sabha is not. So, this then poses the question as to the need for this requirement to be included as a clause in the new constitution. Generally charities do **not** require EC members to be CRB vetted. I submit that if prospective EC members were required to complete CRB checks then talented, competent people who may have minor issues in this regard will be deterred from voluntary service, which even the Government feels is not in the spirit of *Rehabilitation*.

6. Details of Trustees

Please note that details of the current trustees should be recorded correctly, as the draft document names Mr. Sewak as a trustee, who unfortunately is now passed.

7. Re: Membership Fees

The proposed constitution includes increases in fees for both ordinary and life memberships, which is not something that can be justified in the view of many Sikhs. Many charities attract members without any financial stipulation whatsoever, and being a religious organisation, fees should be a voluntary aspect, whereby prospective members make donations according to affordability, which is in any case a fundamental aspect of our faith in that Sikhs give voluntarily, not on demand.

Additionally, I have canvassed opinion and many feel that offering two free life memberships to those worshippers who book Akhand Paths is folly and not worthy of a constitutional clause – perhaps a promotional offer when bookings are low!

Mindful of the fact that the Sabha's finances run into millions of pounds, I suggest that for us all to be rightly proud of our charity status, it is imperative that the above changes be introduced and perhaps then our Sabha's constitution, might even become a beacon for other Sikh institutions that find themselves captivated by conflict. I shall certainly hope for this.

I trust you will kindly consider these proposals and suggestions.

Yours faithfully

DELETED

Endorsed By:

DELETED

Encs: