The *10 P's* of Charity Governance

A map for navigation, not a compliance checklist. A practitioner framework for charities (£10k–£500k income). Read P1 through to P10. Skim **bolded elements** for what's universal. Read full panels for detail. Use board questions for discussion.
Use alongside **CC3 (The Essential Trustee)**, **CC guidance**, and the **Charity Governance Code (2025)**. Apply proportionately to your charity's size and context.

P 1 Principles

CC3 SIX CORE DUTIES — THE LEGAL DUTIES THAT THE REMAINING 9 P'S PUT INTO PRACTICE

1. **Carrying out purposes for the Public Benefit**
2. **Comply with the governing document and the law**
3. **Act in the charity's best interests**
4. **Manage the charity's resources responsibly**
5. **Act with reasonable care and skill**
6. **Ensure accountability to beneficiaries, donors and the public**

BOARD QUESTION: Can the board demonstrate — not just recite — how it discharges each of the six duties?

P 2 Purpose

Mission clarity, values, public benefit and strategic direction. The anchor for every board decision. Trustees must be able to articulate what the charity exists to do — in plain language — and **regularly test whether activities remain within purposes** and whether strategy is still the right expression of the mission. Have a theory of change.

BOARD QUESTION: Is our strategy still the right expression of our mission — or have we drifted?

P 3 Platform

Legal structure, governing document, charitable objects and **regulatory registration. Managing conflicts of interest and related party transactions.** Legal structure also determines trustee liability: CIOs and charitable companies limit personal exposure; unincorporated charities do not.

BOARD QUESTION: Have all trustees read and understood our governing document?

P 4 People

Recruit, induct and steward trustees, staff and volunteers with the right skills, EDI and commitment. Apply role clarity, onboarding, supervision and exit. Ensure beneficiary representation and stakeholder voice. Conduct regular board skills audits, plan for succession, use EDI targets and foster psychological safety.

BOARD QUESTION: Do we have the diversity, skills and lived experience needed today — and a plan for who we'll need tomorrow?

P 5 Policies

Approved, written standards for how the charity operates — **financial controls**, a **safeguarding policy, data protection, whistleblowing**, codes of conduct and ethics. Policies that are current, proportionate and embedded in practice, not filed and forgotten.

BOARD QUESTION: When did the board last see evidence — not assurance — that key policies are actually working?

P 6 Practice

Ethical behaviours and an inclusive culture. Constructive challenge, collective decision-making, clear delegation framework and disagreement escalation routes. In smaller charities, trustees often contribute operationally, know which hat you're wearing.

BOARD QUESTION: Does our board foster collective accountability and constructive challenge — or do we defer rather than probe?

P 7 Protection

Risk register, cyber security, technology and AI policy, **insurance. Active risk ownership including external threats. Know what triggers a Serious Incident Report and file promptly. Safeguarding:** designated leads, safer recruitment and DBS checks. Environmental and climate risks.

BOARD QUESTION: Are our risks proportionate to our mission — and do we have genuine confidence in how they are being managed?

P 8 Prudence

Scrutinise financial reports, set and justify a reserves policy, maintain internal controls and steward assets. Oversee income strategy, financial sustainability and solvency. If fundraising from the public, apply fundraising governance and the Code of Fundraising Practice. Apply property/land rules.

BOARD QUESTION: Are our reserves adequate for the risks we carry — and do we have a credible plan if a major income stream fails?

P 9 Public Accountability

Transparent reporting, timely filings (annual accounts, report and return) and honest impact narratives to beneficiaries, funders and the regulator. Campaigning must further your charitable purposes, **never party political. Know your specific regulators, the accounting regime that applies and independent examination thresholds.**

BOARD QUESTION: Are we meeting our reporting obligations — and does this honestly reflect our impact and our challenges?

P 10 Performance

Evaluate board effectiveness and iterate, using learning to drive continuous improvement. Structured beneficiary and stakeholder feedback as standard. **Strategic review considers collaboration, merger, or planned closure and feeds back directly into Purpose cyclically.**

BOARD QUESTION: Does the board evaluate its own effectiveness regularly and rigorously?