

Guide for New PCC Members

Date Originated/Amended: August 2007

Author/Editor: Diocesan Secretary

The Parochial Church Council

SOME HISTORY

In the long history of the Church of England, the Parochial Church Council is a relatively recent invention. Until the early years of the 20th century the administration and finances of a parish were the legal responsibility of the incumbent and the churchwardens. The members of congregations had little say in the running of the church except in electing the churchwardens. Parochial Church Councils were first given legal status in 1919. Since then a number of Acts have defined and refined the composition, functions and rights and responsibilities of the PCC.

Currently the rules governing the PCC are set out in the Church Representation Rules (CRR) 2006 [ISBN 0-7151-1012-8] which form part of the Synodical Government Measure 1969. A copy of the CRR may be obtained from the SPCK Bookshop in Hereford or from Church House Publishing, Church House, Great Smith Street, London, SW 1 P 3NZ [www.chpublishing.co.uk] price £7.99.

STATUS OF THE PCC

The PCC is a corporate body, a separate legal entity, and is therefore separate from the members of the PCC. For that reason, changes in the membership of the PCC should not result in any changes to contracts etc. entered into by previous members because it is the PCC, as a legal entity in its own right, which has entered into contracts. Another consequence is that individual PCC members should not become personally responsible for the liabilities of the PCC.

The PCC is a charity by virtue of its objectives, which are basically the advancement of religion and the making of provision for public worship, and the members of the PCC are the trustees of the charity.

PCCs are not, at present, required to register with the Charity Commission as they are classified as excepted charities by virtue of the Charities (Exception from Registration) Regulations 1996. The regulations only remove the requirement to register (and therefore submit accounts and returns to the Charity Commission) but PCCs must comply with all other aspects of charity law.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE PCC

The PCC has responsibility for a whole range of things including the care, maintenance and insurance of the church and its contents and the care and maintenance of the churchyard, responsibility for the conduct of the financial affairs of the parish, rights regarding women priests, rights in relation to church appointments, functions in relation to church services etc.

It largely discharges its responsibility for the financial affairs of the parish by the appointment of a treasurer, but this does not absolve it of ultimate responsibility and for that reason the PCC should require the treasurer to make regular reports on the financial position to PCC meetings.

The Charities Act 1993 and CRRs charge the trustees with the following specific duties in relation to finances:

- The keeping of proper accounting records. This means records that show from day to day amounts received and expended, including the matters to which they relate, and a record of assets and liabilities. The records should be sufficient to show the financial position of the PCC at any time.
- The preparation of annual financial statements and an annual report that complies with the CRRs and the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- Appointment of an independent examiner or auditor and making arrangements for the examination or audit to be carried out.
- Presenting the annual report, financial statements and independent examiner's or auditor's report to the APCM, and displaying those before and after the meeting.

As the annual report and financial statements are the responsibility of the PCC, the CRRs require them to be approved by the PCC and signed by the Chairman and one other PCC member before presentation to the APCM.

Another area of responsibility is that of notifying the Data Protection Commissioner, where necessary in respect of data held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

FUNCTIONS OF THE PCC

Under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 the PCC has the following functions:

- co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
- the consideration and discussion of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but no the declaration of the doctrine of the Church on any question;
- making known and putting into effect any provisions made by the diocesan synod or the deanery synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the council on any particular matter;
- giving advice to the diocesan synod and the deanery synod on any matter referred to the council;
- raising such matters as the council consider appropriate with the diocesan synod or deanery synod.

The Synodical Government Measure 1969 states:

It shall be the duty of the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance in the parish.

It then goes on to set out a number of functions of the PCC, of which perhaps the most important, and certainly the widest, is:

co-operation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The incumbent and the PCC each have their own particular rights and responsibilities in the life of the church but the important theme here is partnership and co-operation.

More specifically, the PCC is responsible for the maintenance of the church buildings and churchyard, and, with the incumbent, for deciding how the church's money is to be spent. The PCC is formally the employer of any paid workers. The PCC has the right to be consulted about major changes to the forms of worship used in the parish and about the appointment of a new incumbent. It is also consulted about any pastoral scheme affecting the parish.

PCC membership will include one or more members of the deanery synod, who have an important role in linking the parish into the wider structures of the church.

OFFICERS OF THE PCC

Every PCC shall have a:

Chairman - The minister of the parish shall be the chairman of the PCC.

Vice-Chairman - A lay member of the PCC shall be the vice-chairman.

Secretary - The PCC may appoint one of its members to act as Secretary. Failing such appointment some other fit person may act as Secretary but shall not thereby become a member of the PCC (unless co-opted)

Treasurer - The PCC may appoint one or more of its members to act as Treasurer either solely or jointly. Failing such appointment the role should be carried out by the Churchwardens or some other fit person may act as Secretary but shall not thereby become a member of the PCC (unless co-opted)

Electoral Roll Officer - Who may but need not be a member of the PCC.

TERM OF OFFICE

CRR 16 states that members of the PCC "*... shall hold office from the conclusion of the annual meeting at which they were elected until the conclusion of the third annual meeting thereafter, one third retiring and being elected each year ...*"

That said a PCC member may resign his/her membership by notice in writing sent or given to the PCC Secretary and the resignation shall take effect on the date specified in the notice or, if no date is specified, on receipt of the note by the PCC Secretary.

SIZE OF THE PCC

The size of the PCC depends on the size of the electoral role. For less than 50 on the roll the PCC will be 6. For between 50 and 100 the PCC will be 9 and for over 100 there may be an additional 3 members for every 100 up to a maximum of 15 members.

The PCC may also co-opt additional person up to one fifth of the elected members, or 2 whichever is the greater, being either clergy or laity. The term of office of a co-opted person shall be until the conclusion of the next annual meeting

COMMITTEES OF THE PCC

Given its wide responsibilities (pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical), the PCC on its own may not be able to do everything that is needed in the parish. Many PCCs therefore have several of committees, each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. Each committee has at least one PCC member on it. These committees are formally responsible to the PCC, reporting back to it regularly and seeking its approval before making major changes or incurring significant costs. The PCC should also provide strategic direction to the committees so they are reasonably joined up and all pulling in the same direction.

MEETINGS OF THE PCC

PCCs may meet as often as they wish but must meet at least 4 times per year.

Except in an emergency or other special circumstance requiring immediate action, when not less than 3 days notice is required, members should receive at least 7 days notice of any meeting.

No business shall be transacted by the PCC unless at least one third of the members are present.

No business, which is not on the agenda, shall be transacted by the PCC unless at least three-quarters of the members present so agree.

Minutes of the meeting shall be made available to all members of the PCC and to any person with the specific approval of the PCC.

JOINT/TEAM/GROUP PCCs

Where there is more than one place of worship within a parish, or two or more parishes in a single benefice the PCCs may decide to create a joint, team or group PCC to better manage the administration of the whole. This form of scheme is of particular value where one ordained minister is chairman on several PCCs and therefore overburdened by PCC meetings.

YOUR ROLE ON THE PCC

Your role on the PCC will depend on the needs of your particular parish and the specific skills, experience and attributes you bring to the PCC.

That said there are certain matters that should be common to all PCC members. You should make yourself aware of key facts about your church and the area which it serves. What percentage of your local population comes to church? Why do many not come? What are the needs of the local community? Can your church meet some of those needs? Do you need to change as a church to meet those needs? What are the needs of your congregation? What is the financial and material state of your church?

In addition to local concerns you should keep yourself informed about Diocesan and National church matters so that you can let your Deanery representatives have your views and comments when such matters come up for discussion.

ADVICE

Membership of the PCC can be daunting especially if you have been a member of your local church for many years but have never really understood what the PCC does or what is expected of you and perhaps now do not wish to ask other members of the PCC about your new role. The Diocesan Secretary is ready to answer any question about the PCC (or indeed any other church matter) and may be contacted at:

The Diocesan Office, The Palace, Hereford, HR4 9BL Tel: 01432
373300 [email: diooffice@hereford.anglican.org](mailto:diooffice@hereford.anglican.org)