

An introduction to the workings of the PCC

**For Clergy, Churchwardens,
Treasurers and PCC Secretaries.**

Copies available on request and electronically from the diocesan website: www.cofeguildford.org.uk

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Sharing the leadership of your church in Worship and Mission

Purpose of the PCC

The role of the Parochial Church Council is to provide an official, partly-elected team that shares leadership responsibility for the Parish with its Incumbent. The following notes offer some general guidelines on how the PCC can be effective in enabling and supporting the mission of the church. For an authoritative answer on specific points, please refer to the latest edition of the *Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors*, published legislation, or consult the Diocesan Secretary.

Relationship with the Incumbent

It is the shared responsibility of the incumbent and PCC to consult on all matters of general concern and importance to the Parish. Together, you co-operate to promote and provide *leadership* of the whole mission of the Church:

- In ***prayer*** – both personal and corporate.
- in ***pastoral*** ways - looking after individuals.
- in ***evangelistic*** ways - sharing the Good News of Christ and inviting people to share in God's saving love for all.
- in ***social concern*** - helping all in need, especially disadvantaged and persecuted members of society.
- ***ecumenically*** - encouraging fruitful relationships with other Christian denominations.

This requires mutual support, understanding, and an open discussion of ideas and plans, leading to *shared* decision-making.

Relationship with the congregation

It is equally the collective duty of the PCC to be constantly aware of the views of the congregation and to maintain good mutual communications so that people know they are fairly represented and considered. Members are voted into place by those who trust them to represent their interests fairly.

An inclusive vision

The PCC will focus principally on how to optimise the church's mission and purpose - including work with children, families, young people, adult nurture, worship, outreach – and the provision of appropriate resources to enable the agreed vision. It will seek to discern God's evolving vision for the parish and how to bring that vision into being.

Doctrine

There is great variety in views within the Church of England membership as to what constitutes '*sound doctrine*' (the church's official teaching and beliefs) and the PCC may discuss it and any other matters of religious interest,

But it may NOT declare doctrine as this is the prerogative of the House of Bishops.

Membership and Meetings

Membership of the PCC - *ex officio, elected, co-opted*

Those with automatic membership (*ex officio*) are:

- all priests, deacons, deaconesses or lay workers licensed to the Parish.
- the churchwardens.
- anyone on the electoral roll who is on the Deanery, Diocesan or General Synods.

[Readers are **not** *ex officio*, but the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) can determine that specific Readers should be members. Alternatively Readers can stand for election.]

The number of *elected* members is decided by and voted for at the APCM. To be eligible for the PCC you must be over 16, on the electoral roll, and be confirmed or ready to be so. Extra members may be *co-opted* by the PCC during the year under certain conditions.

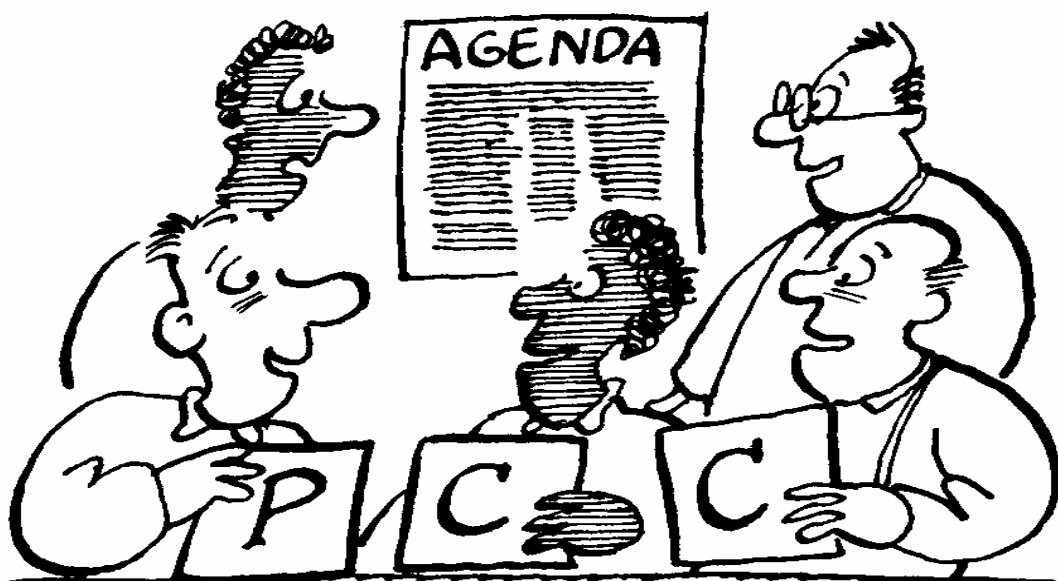
PCC membership normally stands for one year, or for three, with one third of the members retiring every year. Synod members are elected for three years.

The APCM may impose a limit on how long members can serve on the PCC continuously, after which a break of a year is required.

Agenda Planning & Presentation – some guidelines:

- Agenda items to be brief bullet points, double spaced on more than one page of A4.
- Items ordered with most important first.
- Items to be allotted approximate timings to indicate general or detailed discussion.

- Items described appropriately as for discussion, for information only, for decision.
- Try to vary the agenda to include vision and development items regularly, as well as routine matters.
- To make best use of PCC meeting time, appoint task groups for detailed matters needing lengthy consideration and consultation – eg. Fabric, finance - to make recommendations to the PCC.
- Requests for Any Other Business (AOB) items to be made at least 24 hours in advance unless very urgent.
- Send out supporting papers and reports with agenda at least 10 days ahead of the meeting to give time for reading, prayer and reflection.
- Only papers for AOB items to be tabled at the meeting.



Conducting the Meeting, especially for Chairing:

- Meetings are held at least 4 times a year at regular intervals.
- The incumbent/parish priest will chair the meeting, but can delegate this role for part or all of the agenda.

- Begin with prayer and plan for no longer than 2 hours, preferably less as concentration after a long day is limited.
- Send sub-committee reports with agenda and limit discussion to clarification and decisions as needed.
- Chair to ensure everyone with significant input has opportunity, and those dominating discussion or repeating arguments to be invited politely to give time to others.
- Layout of seating is important and should enable everyone to see each other.
- Use of modern communication methods for presentations of large or complex projects is encouraged.
- Allow reasonable time for discussion then request decision or agreement to defer if vital additional information or further consultation is needed. End or suspend when a subject runs out of steam!
- Seek to include stimulating items with the mundane to enable good balance.
- Keep to timings as closely as possible and get agreement with all key contributors for a short extension if absolutely necessary. Alternatively, decide to delay to next meeting or Standing Committee.
- End with prayer for blessing and for God's grace especially when discussions have raised serious disagreements or difficulties.
- Enjoy your PCC 'business' as you get to know each other and share in governance of your church - and have a social activity occasionally outside of usual business meeting times.

Format for PCC Minutes – guidelines for Secretaries:

- Brief summary of essentials, preferably no longer than two pages of A4.

- Summarise outline discussions and ensure accurate wording for decisions and action points, tasks and those taking responsibility for action.
- Minutes provide a record of matters discussed, essential points raised, decisions made and agreed actions. Too much detail is not necessary.

Voting:

The PCC can decide to vote on an issue (proposed and seconded) with the chair having a casting vote. Normally matters are decided by a simple majority. It may be wiser *not* to vote on important issues of principle; a formal vote, however, can be useful for legal or personal reasons (e.g., application for a faculty, support for a candidate for a church post). If less than one third of the PCC attend its decisions are not binding.

No member of PCC should be pressurised into agreeing to a statement contrary to his/her beliefs, and can abstain.

The Standing Committee of PCC, consisting of the incumbent, churchwardens and treasurer, plans the agenda and work of the PCC, handles urgent matters between main meetings, and is accountable to the PCC.

Responsibilities:

Towards the wider church - deanery and diocese:

- Full contact is kept with the wider church via those PCC members who are also Synod members. They report back regularly to the PCC and to the APCM, and raise issues from the Parish at Synod meetings. For their part, the PCC is responsible for making known and putting into effect provisions made by the Synods (without

compromising their own powers), and for making sure there is two-way communication.

- As an important and integral part of the two-way Synodical government, the PCC can propose motions to deanery and diocesan Synods, and table questions at Synod meetings.
- If any new pastoral scheme, (for example, a change in the Parish boundary, or a new way of deploying clergy in a team or group ministry, or any church-sharing agreement with another denomination) is proposed by the diocese, the PCC must be fully consulted.
- The PCC can make representations to the bishop about any matter affecting the welfare of the church, usually raising the issue with the rural dean or archdeacon first.

For the buildings and possessions of the parish:

- The PCC is responsible for the condition, upkeep and insurance of all buildings, the churchyard, and movable items. This includes carrying out work recommended by the 'quinquennial' - a report on the state of the church buildings produced every five years by an approved inspecting architect appointed by the Parish.
- An annual *Fabric Report* is presented to the PCC by the churchwardens, together with the *terrier* (land records), a *log book* of repairs and alterations, and an *inventory* of church property
- If the PCC wishes to acquire land or other property of permanent endowment it must have the consent of the Diocesan Board of Finance. Even land (or any other property) given in permanent trust to the PCC has the

Diocesan Board of Finance as its *custodian trustee* and the PCC is its *managing trustee*. It cannot be sold without the Board's permission. Legal proceedings concerning church property are complex and need the assistance of specialist solicitors.



Financial responsibilities:

The PCC has overall charge of financial expenditure in the Parish, but is always in close consultation with the incumbent as to how income and other funds should be allocated, in the Parish or beyond.

- The PCC must make an annual budget, and take steps to raise the money required. Budgets should be monitored during the year. The independently examined or audited church accounts (having been approved by the PCC) must be presented for discussion at the APCM.
- The PCC pays the wages of church workers such as vergers, youth workers, organists etc., and are parties with the incumbent to any formal contracts drawn up by the Parish and any changes required.

The incumbent cannot appoint or dismiss paid staff without the consent of the PCC.

- You may be relieved to know that, because the PCC is a **body corporate** it is separate in law from those who serve on it.

This means that *you are not personally responsible for debts the PCC incurs.*

So if something dreadful happens to any church property the PCC members do not foot the bill,

(**but** they *are* also charity trustees, with a duty to take proper care in all their decisions concerning the finances and property of the Parish.)



Trusteeship

More detailed information is to be found in the booklet: Trusteeship - An Introduction for PCC Members produced by the Church Commissioners/Charity Commission.

(Download from:

<http://www.parishresources.org.uk/charity/Trusteeship%20leaflet%208pp.pdf>)

When the living of the Parish becomes vacant:

- When a parish priest leaves, the PCC has an important role to play in finding a successor. It prepares a written profile (Statement of Needs) describing the conditions, needs, and traditions of the Parish, and the kind of person they believe is needed. (Assistance can be provided through contact with the Archdeacon.) They also appoint two appropriate lay parish representatives, not necessarily churchwardens, to discuss with the patron and the bishop who should be appointed.
- Once a vacancy has been announced, the Archdeacon will advise the churchwardens of the special process which must be followed and a Vacancy Pack will be offered to help them.
- It will be necessary to consider the options open to PCCs regarding the appointment of a woman priest as set out in the appropriate regulations.

Enjoy leading your PCC!