Welcome to the role of PCC secretary and thank you for your willingness to serve. The PCC is the governing body of the church and as such is called, alongside the minister, to lead in carrying out its mission. It is also the means by which information and resolutions are passed from the Diocesan and Deanery Synods to the congregation and, just as importantly, from the congregation to these wider groups.

As secretary it is your role to be the point of contact for the PCC and to be responsible for the preparation and distribution of all paperwork that enables it to operate well. This guide aims to give you an overview of the tasks that are likely to fall to you as well as some of the key legislation that applies to PCCs.

This document is not an exhaustive list of the things you might do as a PCC secretary nor does it contain the answers to all questions of procedure. A copy of the Church Representation Rules (particularly the sections on Parochial Church Meeting and Councils as well as the supplementary sections) is the working document for these types of questions and it is essential to have a copy at meetings.

This guide also does not take into account local variations. While all of the tasks outlined do need to be completed they do not necessarily have to be undertaken by the same person. If you are new to the post please speak to your minister, churchwardens and other members of the PCC to get a better idea of what happens in your church. The role of PCC secretary is an important ministry but it is not one you undertake alone. Also remember that Diocesan Staff are happy to help with any problems you may come across.
PCC Meetings
The PCC is required by law to meet at least 4 times a year (as well as the Annual Parochial Church Meeting – APCM) unless there is an approved scheme for a Joint Parochial Church Council in place (see below). A PCC is quorate (can legally conduct its business) if a third of its current members is present and voting is decided by a simple majority of those present. But on some occasions, for example when there is an item of business to do with the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, it is necessary for there to be a majority of all PCC members to be quorate. If necessary the chair has a second or casting vote. If the meeting is not quorate it can not make any binding decisions or vote on any agenda issues. Appendix II of the Church Representation Rules gives greater detail on these matters.

If a meeting has to be postponed, members must be given written notice of the date of the reconvened meeting within 14 days of the original meeting date. Emergency meetings can be convened by the chair with at least three days' notice in writing and the quorum for such a meeting is a majority of PCC members. Only business specified in the notice convening the meeting may be discussed.

Safeguarding & DBS
Taking care of and protecting vulnerable people within the Church is a matter of great and increasing importance. It is also a legal responsibility. Under section 5 of the Safeguarding & Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 the PCC must have due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and every PCC annual report should include a statement as to whether the council has complied with that duty. The PCC needs to ensure that one of its members has lead responsibility for safeguarding in respect of its activities, that it gives regular consideration to safeguarding at its meetings and that its employees and volunteers are recruited safely. Safer recruitment includes carrying out DBS checks on those who hold qualifying positions as set out in the Church of England’s latest Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance. All trustees (e.g. full PCC members) of a charity that sponsors services aimed at children or vulnerable adults are eligible for a DBS check. The current guidance does not state that every eligible person must apply (this is different from qualifying roles for people working directly with children or vulnerable adults where there is no option but to apply). There is an expectation that the PCC will identify a reasonable number of its members to be checked given the nature of the activities it undertakes and, as a minimum, that ought to include the churchwardens and the person on the PCC with the lead responsibility for safeguarding.

As from 1st January 2017 it is the case that people with criminal records or other relevant history relating to safeguarding issues are disqualified from membership of PCCs and synods. This is the case whether or not the specific role requires or is eligible for a DBS check. If in doubt, please seek advice from the Diocesan Office.

Membership
A lay person can be elected to the PCC if:
   a) Their name has been on the electoral roll for at least 6 months unless they are under the age of 18 at the date of the election.
   b) They have received Communion at least 3 times during the 12 months preceding the date of the election.
   c) They are 16 or older
   d) They are not disqualified (see below)

All full PCC members are charity trustees. However, while you as the PCC Secretary are an officer of the PCC, you may not be a member which means you may not be a charity
trustee. If you have been elected or coopted as a PCC member and then appointed as Secretary then you are a full PCC member and charity trustee and have voting rights.

If you have not been elected or coopted as a PCC member but have agreed to be Secretary then you are not a PCC member or trustee and may not vote. The same applies to PCC Treasurers, Safeguarding officers etc.

**Disqualifications**
Any person who is disqualified from being a charity trustee under section 72(1) of the Charities Act 1993 cannot be a Churchwarden, member of a PCC or officer of a PCC. A person who is disqualified from holding office under section 10(6) of the Incumbent (Vacation of Benefice) Measure 1997 is also disqualified from being nominated, chosen or elected from serving as a churchwarden or member of a parochial church council. Any person who is included in a barred list (within the meaning of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006), or has been convicted of an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 is disqualified from being nominated, chosen or elected as a Churchwarden, PCC Secretary, Treasurer or member of a PCC.

**Your Role**

**Agendas**

It is your task to prepare the agenda for PCC meetings, with the minister and standing committee, and circulate to members at least seven days before the meeting. If possible it is also a good idea to circulate any written reports or documents that are due to be discussed so that members are able to read them beforehand. It is absolutely fine for this to be done via email for those happy to receive documents like this. The order of the agenda is flexible so that if a guest has been invited to contribute to the meeting their item can be taken near the beginning.

A word of warning, it is very easy for the agenda to focus on business matters to the exclusion of all else and this can lead to discussions that appear to have little to do with furthering the mission of the church. An awareness of the mission should be present in all that we do but it is often a good idea to be more explicit and intentional about this when planning the meetings. For example, if your parish or mission community has a Mission Action Plan the PCC might decide to focus on a different point or section at each meeting to discuss progress and the way ahead. Alternatively, the PCC can give special attention to a particular sub-committee at each meeting or invite speakers to talk on areas that are important to the ministry of your church. How your PCC decides to do this will be reflected in the agenda. The outline given below is to remind you of some of the business items that should be discussed regularly.

**A guideline agenda**

1. Prayer
2. Apologies for absence
3. Membership - a report on changes in the membership of the PCC since the last meeting *(this may not be an item on every occasion)*
4. Minutes:
   i. To approve the minutes of the last meeting
   ii. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Receive minutes/reports of sub-committees/working parties or other officers. These sub-committees may look at issues such as outreach, discipleship, stewardship, building programmes etc.
6. Fabric *(state of the building, repairs, future plans)*
7. Finance *(to receive a report from the treasurer)*
8. Safeguarding (to show compliance with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016).
9. Deanery or diocesan items
10. Future events: to make arrangements for a forthcoming event.
11. Correspondence
12. Any other urgent business.
13. Confidentiality: to decide whether any part of the proceedings of the meeting should be regarded as confidential.
14. Closing Prayer

Some of these issues can be covered very quickly and if there is nothing to report then it is fine to say so and for the chair to move on. There are some items that do not appear at every meeting but should be raised at specific points of the year. For example the fabric report and the financial statement should be presented to the PCC by the churchwardens before the Annual Meeting so that members can discuss it before recommending it to the wider church community at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Similarly, at the meeting following the Annual meeting the PCC needs to elect a vice-chair, treasurer, secretary and electoral roll officer as well as other key people such as the safeguarding representative or stewardship officer. It is also important to decide who should comprise the standing committee and any other committee you want to establish. At some point in the year it is useful to decide the dates for the year ahead.

On some occasions it is possible for matters arising from the minutes to dominate the agenda in terms of the time they take to discuss. It is perfectly possible, from time to time, to take matters arising as the penultimate item on the agenda and to see whether this gives a better balance to the meeting as a whole.

**Minutes**

You need to attend the meetings and take accurate notes (including attendance), so you can prepare minutes and distribute them afterwards. The minutes do not need to include a fulsome account of who said what and to whom but are instead a brief summary of essentials. As a general guide aim for no more than two pages of A4. However, it is important that the minutes include accurate and clear wording for decisions, resolutions and action points. All resolutions passed by the PCC should be recorded with the names of the proposer, seconder and voting figures. If action is to be taken please make it clear who is responsible. It is often a good idea to put names in a separate column running alongside the minutes so they are obvious or at least put them in bold type.

The minutes of formal meetings normally follow a pattern similar to that below:

- Description of meeting - ie: title, date, time, place, etc
- List of those present
- Apologies for absence
- Record of any corrections necessary to the previous meeting’s minutes followed by a note that the minutes were approved
- Matters arising from the minutes - normally this reports action taken as a result of decisions at the last meeting.
- Other agenda items – including reports from sub-committees where needed.
- Date of next meeting
- Confidentiality - Where the PCC decides that part of the meeting is confidential, you should minute those items separately clearly marked as confidential.

When the draft minutes are ready check them with the chair before they are circulated to other members. The minutes do not become an official record until they have been
approved at the next meeting and it is always useful to bring your initial notes in case any items are disputed. It is important to maintain a complete set of minutes with accompanying papers.

The Annual Parish Meeting (formerly the Annual Vestry Meeting) and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)
The first of these meetings is usually relatively short and its purpose is to elect the churchwardens. Anyone resident in the parish or on the civil electoral roll of the parish may attend and vote and it is important for the chairperson of the annual Parish meeting to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the procedure for electing churchwardens which is set out in the Churchwardens Measure 2001. The second, usually held immediately afterwards, is only open to those on the church electoral roll and is to elect representatives to the Deanery Synod and the PCC, and to appoint sidespersons and an auditor or independent examiner. Further information on the Annual Meeting can be found in rules 6-13 of the Church Representation Rules.

Your Role
These meetings require quite a bit of forward planning and a likely timetable is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>If not already fixed decide, with the minister and churchwardens, on a date for the APCM. Please note that the meeting must be held before the 30th April.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Settle the agenda for the APCM with the minister or during a vacancy with the churchwardens. The final PCC meeting before the APCM needs to consider and approve the financial statements and the annual report so that they can be submitted on their behalf at the APCM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>The APCM must be held before the 30th April. Remember to put up the appropriate notices (which are available to download from the Diocesan website or can be purchased as paper copies from Church House Publishing at the address given below) at least 2 Sundays before the meeting. The financial statements should also be on display for 7 days before the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Meeting</td>
<td>Return the required forms to the Diocesan Secretary (this may be via the Archdeacon at the Visitation) and the deanery synod secretary with details of your parish’s deanery synod representatives. The results of the election must be published as soon as possible after the meeting for a period of at least fourteen days. Copies of the accounts and the annual report should be sent to the Diocesan Secretary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first PCC meeting after the APCM</td>
<td>The first meeting may take place very soon after the APCM or at a later date. After the first meeting of the newly elected PCC, return forms to the Diocesan Secretary (this may be via the Archdeacon at the Visitation) with details of churchwardens, PCC secretary and treasurer. You do not need to include the names of other PCC members or sidespersons. At this meeting you should also elect a vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, electoral roll officer and safeguarding representative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agenda & Minutes
The only business to be contracted at the meeting of parishioners is the election of churchwardens. Apart from the usual agenda items (apologies, minutes of the last annual meeting etc) there are items that usually only appear at the APCM:

- Elections
  - Lay members of the PCC are also elected every 3 years although this is often a rolling process as terms of office finish at different times.
- Appoint an independent examiner/auditor of accounts
- Appoint sidespersons (annually)
- Report on changes in the electoral roll
- Minister’s report (or in a vacancy a report by the chair). This is not a legal requirement but it is often a good opportunity for them to review, to thank and to outline a vision for the coming year.
- Annual report on the proceedings of PCC and the activities of the church generally. As secretary you will probably be asked to compile this report. Again, it does not have to be lengthy but should contain details of the major events in the life of the church and the substantive areas of discussion of the PCC.
- Audited statements of funds or property if any, remaining in the hands of the PCC at the preceding 31st December.
- Financial statements of PCC for the year ending the 31st December. independently examined or audited.
- A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church or churches in the parish. This is given by one of the churchwardens.
- A report on the proceedings of Deanery Synod given by one of the representatives

Again it is your duty to compile concise minutes of the meeting.

Parishes with more than one place of worship
In parishes with more than one place of worship arrangements are possible for congregations to both ensure that their views are represented and that they are able to share in the responsibilities of leadership. At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting one or both of the following schemes may be agreed.

1. Elections to the PCC happen in such a way as to ensure due representation of the congregations at each place of worship.
2. Authority is delegated to a District Church Council (which then elects its own members and officers) to oversee the leadership of an individual place of worship. However, there are certain functions which may not be delegated and these include the production of the financial statement of the parish. A scheme such as this, as well as that of a joint PCC (see below), needs to be ratified by the Bishop’s Council.

More detailed information on this may be found in rule 18 of the Church Representation Rules and advice is available from the Synod Office.

Joint PCCs
It is possible for two or more parishes to establish a joint PCC. In order to set up this arrangement the scheme must be agreed at the annual meetings of each of the parishes
including matters such as how the joint PCC should be elected and how it should be chaired. The individual PCCs may then delegate many of its powers to this joint body although again there are restrictions on this but arrangements can be made to reduce the number of PCC meetings. Further information is found in rules 19-21 of the Church Representation Rules and again advice is available from the Synod Office.

Correspondence
As secretary you will find that much of the correspondence for the PCC and, particularly if you do not have a church administrator, for the church as a whole, will come to you. It is up to you to either pass it on to the relevant person or to present it at the next PCC or other appropriate meeting. The task of responding may well also fall to you, usually having taken guidance on what sort of response is required. It is always helpful to respond in timely fashion which may require responding before the next PCC meeting is scheduled. For example, it may be the case that the views of the PCC on a particular issue are needed by the Diocese and a request will be made for a written reply. If at all possible please do this within the time frame given. Your opinion and input are really valued and we may be surprisingly tenacious in asking for it. If you can respond promptly it is appreciated and will prevent multiple communications.

Some requests are made on a regular (often annual) basis, for example the collection of attendance data via the Statistics for Mission form, issued every autumn. The data helps us to plan for mission and ministry in individual parishes and mission communities and more widely in the diocese. Once we have extracted the relevant information the forms are forwarded to the Department for Research and Statistics of the Archbishops’ Council for the compilation of national comparative statistics.

Importantly, during a vacancy or impending vacancy the PCC Secretary is the point of contact for the Patrons, Registry and the Bishop’s Office and undertakes much of the legally required correspondence on behalf of the PCC. The appointment process has a strict timetable of notices to be displayed and forms to be completed and may require extraordinary meetings of the PCC. The staff in the Old Deanery will guide you through this process.

Training, Mentoring and Succession Planning
The diocesan office with the Diocesan Registrar provides training sessions for all parochial lay officers annually. When you are new to a role, it is often useful to speak to someone who has been ‘in post’ for a while. If you do not know of someone locally please contact the Old Deanery and we will put you into contact with a willing mentor. Looking towards the future it is also a good idea to have an exit strategy of your own. Some people are happy to serve in the same way for decades while others prefer to find new challenges as well as to just take time off and recharge for the next period of service. A change of posts is also a good way of bringing new people into the PCC. In the year or so leading up to your intended ‘retirement’ think and pray about who might replace you. This might be the ideal time to mention it to them and begin to give them an idea of what the post entails.

Records
Unless there is a church office in which you can store minute books and papers you may need to keep these things at home. However, this should not mean taking over your house. All records other than current minutes and accounting records in the custody of the PCC secretary and treasurer should be kept in the church safe. Records, i.e. parish register, minute books, deeds, etc, which no longer need to be consulted should be deposited in the appropriate Records Office. This will most often be the Devon Records
Office (contact details below). There is further advice on what should be kept and for how long on the diocesan website as well as in some of the publications mentioned below.

**Other Tasks**

You may additionally find that you are asked to do some of the following:

- **Contact the diocese for information and advice on a variety of issues.** The contact details for the diocesan offices are given at the end of this document.

- **Electoral Roll:** In the absence of an Electoral Roll Officer, you may need to keep the electoral roll up to date and report any changes to the PCC. Sections 1-5 of the Church Representation Rules deal with the Electoral Roll.
  - **Revisions:** The electoral roll should be kept up to date throughout the year when new people may be added and others removed. It is revised annually and the revision is completed not less that 15 days, and not more than 28 days, before the annual meeting. This allows time for anyone who wishes to inspect it to do so. The revised list is posted on the main notice board for at least 14 days before the Annual Meeting. At the meeting itself complete the electoral roll certificate (available from the diocesan website) and post one copy on the notice board (for at least 14 days) and send another to the diocesan offices. This has to be done by 1st June each year.
  - **Renewals:** Every six years a completely new electoral roll is prepared. This process is next due in 2013 and has a longer timetable. Not less than two months before the annual meeting warning is given of the new roll. This warning period lasts for at least 14 days and at every service on each of the two Sundays in this period the person taking the service announces the intention to create a new roll. It is the responsibility of the PCC to take reasonable steps to inform everyone currently on the role that a new roll is being prepared. Everyone who wishes to be on the roll, even if they are already on it, must complete an application form. The new roll is again completed not less that 15 days, and not more than 28 days, before the annual meeting followed by a period of inspection lasting at least 14 days. During this time corrections may be made but there can be no additions or removals.

- **Other Committees:** You may be asked to serve as secretary to other committees connected with the life of the church, for example by attending meetings and compiling minutes. Please do help in this way if you are happy to do so. Equally, if you would prefer not to, it is perfectly acceptable to decline.

There are responsibilities attached to the role of PCC secretary and you should be aware of them before you agree to the position and wholehearted in executing them afterwards. However, they should not become such a burden that they cloud your enjoyment of the church in which you worship. Please do ask for help from your fellow PCC members, the diocesan staff at the Old Deanery and the Diocesan Registrar. Thank you once again for your commitment.
Contacts
The Old Deanery
The Cloisters
Exeter, EX1 1HS
Telephone 01392 272 686
www.exeter.anglican.org

Synod Office
Telephone 01392 294931
synod@exeter.anglican.org

The Diocesan Registrar
Exeter Diocesan Registry
Michelmores LLP
Woodwater House
Pines Hill
Exeter, EX2 5WR

Telephone: 01392 687415
Email: mjf@michelmores.com

Useful Publications
- *Church Representation Rules 2017 edition*: Church House Publishing
  This document is also found online at www.opsi.gov.uk
- *A Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors*, Revised 2010,
  Kenneth M Macmorran & Timothy T Briden: Mowbray
- *Practical Church Management*, 3rd edition 2014, James Behrens: Gracewing

Useful websites
www.parishresources.org.uk
www.dataprotection.gov.uk
Office of Public Sector Information www.opsi.gov.uk

Useful addresses
Devon Record Office
Great Moor House
Bittern Road
Sowton
Exeter
EX2 7NL
Telephone 01392 384253
devrec@devon.gov.uk

Church House Publishing
Church House
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3AZ
Telephone 01603 785923
www.chpublishing.co.uk