

## **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Are you a newly appointed member of a PCC, or someone who is considering standing for election but would like to know more about the roles and responsibilities of membership?**

**If the answer to either question is yes, then we hope that this booklet will answer any questions or concerns you might have, and help you to enjoy your time as a member.**

**This booklet is not intended to be a definitive guide to the PCC, rather, it should be seen as an introduction to membership, and a source of guidance. Your clergy will be able to provide further guidance or, if you are looking for more detail on the workings of the PCC, you will find some suggestions for further reading at the end of the booklet.**

### **WHAT IS THE PCC?**

The Parochial Church Council is the governing body of a parish church. It is also a charity. A PCC with an annual income of more than £100,000 must be registered with the Charity Commissioners; those with an income below this threshold, whilst not currently required to register, must comply with all other charity laws. The PCC has legal status and the Church Representation Rules apply.

### **WHAT DOES THE PCC DO?**

The PCC is a team made up of members of clergy and lay members of the church. Together they are responsible for the overall wellbeing, practical as well as spiritual, of their church, the church members, and the church buildings. The PCC also has a duty to promote the mission of the church within the wider community. Some of the responsibilities are devolved to the Minister and Churchwardens but to quote from the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956 section 2 'It shall be the duty of the minister and the PCC to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish'. Members of the PCC have the right to be consulted, to know what is proposed, and to have the opportunity to express an opinion on it.

The Minister is Chairman of the PCC though he may on occasion ask another member to chair a particular meeting. A treasurer, a secretary and vice-chairman will usually be elected to office at its first meeting after the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). The PCC will also appoint a standing committee, typically the Minister as chair, the churchwardens, the treasurer and two elected members.

### **PRAYER AND WORSHIP**

Prayer and Worship are at the heart of the work of the PCC. The PCC should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for public worship and provide an opportunity for people of all ages to meet for prayer and worship. In practice this might mean agreeing on the format and timings of services that will meet the needs of the church members, providing facilities for younger members and families, setting up Bible study or Prayer groups etc.

## **MISSION AND OUTREACH**

The PCC has an important part to play in promoting the mission of their church, amongst the congregation and in the wider community, and members of the PCC should demonstrate their commitment to the Christian ethos, through leadership, by example and by witness, in the parish. The PCC is encouraged to develop, and maintain, a Mission Action Plan (MAP), to review the life of the church and identify mission opportunities.

## **PASTORAL CARE**

The PCC and its members have a duty to support their clergy, prayerfully and personally. They have a duty to support the members of the congregation and to extend a welcome to all who visit the church, to members of the church community and to those visiting the church at other times. The church has a duty of pastoral care to all who live in our communities, whether members of the church or not, and PCC members are expected to take the lead in demonstrating that care.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **FINANCE**

The PCC will appoint a treasurer, and sometimes an assistant treasurer, to manage the day to day finances of the parish. The treasurer does not need to be a qualified accountant (though a very large parish might consider it appropriate to appoint a qualified accountant). He/She must understand how to maintain books, must have a good knowledge of the parish and the work of the church, and importantly must have the full confidence of the PCC membership. The treasurer will keep members informed on the financial situation and present a full report to each PCC meeting. PCC members are Trustees of a charity and are responsible for managing the Church's finances. They must ensure that all funds are properly accounted for, the books properly maintained, and the PCC annual accounts inspected or audited, and formally approved by the PCC, prior to the APCM.

In law, the PCC is a *body corporate*. This means that it is a separate body from the people who serve on it so PCC members are not liable for any debts incurred by the PCC. However, the trustees do have certain responsibilities under the Charities Act and members should acquaint themselves with [The Charities Act 1993 and the PCC](#) which provides more detailed guidance.

## **BUILDINGS**

The PCC is responsible for the care and maintenance of the fabric of the church, and any other buildings owned by the church. In practice the PCC may appoint a Fabric subcommittee to assist them but the PCC members should be aware of any issues relating to the buildings and they have the responsibility of deciding on them and voting on items of expenditure.

## **THE PCC MEETING**

The PCC is required by law to meet at least four times a year (one meeting may follow on from the APCM) though some PCCs may decide to meet more frequently. There is a strong argument for holding more frequent, but shorter, meetings and in any event good practice suggests a maximum two hours for each meeting as a general rule. The PCC should take time at these meetings to consider and discuss, and if appropriate vote upon, matters concerning the Church of England generally or referred to the PCC by the Bishop or by the deanery, diocesan or General Synod. The PCC may also on occasion decide to send information, an opinion or a motion to the deanery synod. The PCC meeting should be a forum for open discussion with every member feeling able to ask a question or voice an opinion.

## **WHO CAN BE A MEMBER OF THE PCC?**

If you are 16 years old or over, have been on the electoral roll of your parish for at least 6 months and are an actual communicant, **YOU** can stand for election to your PCC as a lay representative unless you are otherwise disqualified (see below).

## **WHO CAN'T BE A MEMBER OF THE PCC?**

You must not permit yourself to be nominated, chosen or elected to the PCC if you are

- a) disqualified from being a charity trustee under section 72(1) of the Charities Act 1993.
- b) included in a Safeguarding & Vulnerable Group Act 2006 barred list or if you have been convicted of an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 of the Children & Young People Act 1933.
- c) disqualified from holding office under section 10(6) of the Incumbent) Vacation of Benefice) Measure 1997.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE PCC**

Members of the PCC are drawn from two sources, those elected at the Annual Parish Church Meeting, and those who are ex officio members.

The following are ex officio members

- All Priests and Deacons licensed to the parish
- Deaconesses and Licensed Lay Workers licensed to the parish
- The churchwardens
- Any person on the electoral roll who is a member of deanery, diocesan or general synod

Additional members may be co-opted onto the council by the PCC during the course of the year.

The number of elected members on a PCC is governed by the Church Representation Rules and is based on the number of people on the electoral roll, but the APCM can determine (to take effect in a year's time) how many elected members a PCC shall have.

Someone may ask - **What skills do I need to be a member of the PCC?**

Skills may be too prescriptive, it is better perhaps to say that someone interested in becoming a member of the PCC will be:

- A committed member of the congregation
- Interested in and involved with the life of the church and the local community
- Willing to learn and to share ideas, experience and gifts
- Caring
- Able to listen to another's point of view

## **THE PLACE OF THE PCC IN THE WIDER CHURCH**

There are around 500 parishes in the Diocese of Exeter and each parish, and its PCC, fulfils an important role as one of the building blocks in the administrative structure of the Diocese, and ultimately the Church of England as a whole.

**The Diocese of Exeter** is one of 44 Dioceses in the Church of England. In Exeter diocese we have a Diocesan Bishop and two Suffragan Bishops of Crediton and Plymouth,

Our 4 **Archdeacons** have responsibility for helping clergy and parishes in the deaneries of their archdeaconries in a variety of ways: pastoral, administrative, legal and much else. We have 22 **Deaneries** in the diocese. They are made up of a number of parishes and, functioning as a **Deanery synod**, they work to bring together the views of their parishes on common problems, to discuss and formulate common policies on these problems, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes, and generally to promote 'the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.' Each deanery has a **Rural Dean** who chairs the deanery synod in partnership with an elected **Lay Chair**. Synod membership comprises all licensed clergy in the deanery area, and lay members elected, triennially, by each parish. Deanery synod members themselves elect the clerical and lay members of the Diocesan Synod, triennially.

The **Diocesan Synod** is the main governing body of the diocese and comprises the 3 Bishops, about 70 elected clergy, and 80 elected laity from the deaneries as well as a number of ex-officio and co-opted members. Matters of mission, strategy, governance and, as the Board of Finance, budgets and accounts are ultimately under the authority of the synod.

**General Synod**, the national governing body for all matters affecting the Church, comprises Bishops, and clergy and laity elected by deanery synod members every five years.

## **FURTHER READING**

'Practical Church Management' James Behrens, published by Gracewing

'A Churchwarden's Handbook' MacMorran and Briden, published by Continuum

['Church Representation Rules 2011'](#) published by Church House Publishing

'An ABC for the PCC' John Pitchford, published by Continuum