

**A GUIDE FOR
PCC SECRETARIES**



**IN THE
DIOCESE OF COVENTRY**

Contents

Tools of the Trade	3
<i>Helpful publications</i>	3
<i>What you will need to take to PCC meetings</i>	3
A Summary of Your Tasks	4
Preparing for a PCC Meeting	5
<i>Preparing the Agenda</i>	5
Minutes of PCC Meetings.....	6
<i>The content of the minutes</i>	6
<i>Taking the minutes</i>	7
<i>Recording the minutes</i>	8
<i>Circulating the minutes</i>	8
<i>Access to the minutes</i>	8
The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM).....	9
<i>Annual Vestry Meeting (to elect the churchwardens)</i>	10
<i>APCM</i>	10
<i>First meeting of the newly-elected PCC</i>	12
<i>After the meetings</i>	12
PCC Membership	13
<i>Subcommittees</i>	14
PCC Meetings	14
<i>Postponed and emergency meetings</i>	15
<i>Different parish circumstances</i>	15
Any Questions?	16

Tools of the Trade

Welcome to the office of the PCC Secretary, and thank you for agreeing to take on the role.

Please make sure that the outgoing PCC Secretary has given you the minute book and a file with all other papers relevant to the post.

Helpful publications include:

- *Coventry Diocesan Directory* for the current year
- *Church Representation Rules* (Church House Publishing, 2011) - referred to throughout this guide as **CRR**.
- *Practical Church Management: A Guide for Every Parish* by James Behrens (Gracewing, 2008)
- *A Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors* by Kenneth M. Macmorran and Timothy Briden (Mowbray, 2010)
- *So the Vicar's Leaving: The Good Interregnum Guide* by Mike Alexander and Jeremy Martineau (Canterbury Press, 2002)

What you will need to take to PCC Meetings:

- Paper and pens (or laptop)
- Agenda and all attachments, plus spare copies
- Minutes of any previous meetings that are on the agenda for approval, with attachments, plus spare copies
- Correspondence received since the last meeting
- Copies of any correspondence sent since the last meeting
- The Minute book or file, containing minutes for the past year's meetings

A Summary of Your Tasks

- To prepare the agenda for PCC meetings, in consultation with the Incumbent or vice-chairman, and circulate it to PCC members at least seven days before the meeting.
- To attend PCC meetings and take accurate notes, from which you will prepare and distribute the minutes of each meeting.
- To ensure that the PCC fixes the dates of future meetings.
- To record, as part of the minutes, any resolutions passed by the PCC, the names of the proposer and seconder, and the voting figures.
- To commission, collect, copy and circulate the annual reports.
- To organise and minute the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM).
- To provide the Diocesan Secretary and Deanery Synod Secretary with up-to-date information about your contact details, the names and contact details of parish officers, and the names and contact details of current Deanery Synod representatives.
- To handle correspondence on behalf of the parish, including thank-you letters to visiting speakers or others who have helped the parish in some way, notes of condolence where appropriate, and so on.
- To respond to requests from the Diocese and Deanery as necessary.

Preparing for a PCC Meeting

Ten days before the meeting, the Secretary should post a notice of the date, time and place of the meeting, signed by the Incumbent or on his/her behalf, at or near the main door of the church. [CRR15]

Seven days before the meeting, the Secretary should send out a notice of the date, time, place and Agenda for the meeting to every PCC member. [CRR15]

Preparing the Agenda

The Secretary will prepare the Agenda in consultation with the Incumbent or vice-chairman. This may be done at a meeting, over the phone or via email. Any member of the PCC is entitled to ask for an item to be included.

Each item should be worded in a way that makes its purpose clear. It may be helpful to indicate how much time is expected to be spent on each item. At the very least, the chairman should indicate what time the meeting will end.

It is a good idea to include *Notice of AOB* at the start of the meeting - or even to require twenty-four hours' notice for AOB - so that members can agree whether items do need to be considered now or could wait, and how much time to allow for them. If an item is not on the Agenda, then it can only be taken under AOB if three-quarters of the people present agree.

Regular Agenda items should include:

- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of the previous meeting
- Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting
- Receiving minutes of any committees and working parties
- Matters arising from these minutes
- Correspondence
- Health and Safety [as advised by Ecclesiastical Insurance]
- Any other business (AOB)

In addition, many PCCs find it useful to include as regular items:

- A slot for the Incumbent
- Finance and fundraising
- Fabric and churchyard
- Report on Deanery Synod
- Worship
- Any items requested by the Deanery or Diocese
- Updating the electoral roll [for larger congregations]

Parish PCC meetings in multi-parish benefices are often preceded by a benefice meeting, at which some of these items can usefully be covered.

Minutes of PCC Meetings [CRR15]

Minutes of the proceedings of PCC meetings must be written down and signed at the next meeting by the meeting's chairman, to confirm that they are an accurate record of what happened.

The Content of the Minutes

The purpose of taking minutes is to provide a record of a meeting that is accurate, brief and clear.

They should include a record of:

- a description of the meeting - e.g. *Parochial Church Council of NAME, Minutes of the Meeting held at LOCATION on DATE at TIME;*
- a list of those present;
- apologies for absence;
- any corrections to the minutes of the last meeting;
- the approval of the minutes;
- matters arising from the minutes, including actions taken as a result of decisions at the last meeting;
- the wording (which the Secretary may suggest) of formal motions, resolutions and amendments, together with voting figures;
- for other Agenda items - the main areas of discussion, all important facts and the results of discussions (but not the details of who said what);
- the dates of future meetings.

The names of members voting for and against any resolution should be recorded **only** when one-fifth of those members present require it. Any individual member, however, can require that the way s/he voted be recorded.

If the meeting decides that an item should not be discussed outside the meeting, then it should be recorded separately - preferably on coloured paper and marked "Confidential".

Taking the Minutes

Some parishes have a Minutes Secretary in addition to the PCC Secretary.

Keep an eye on the agenda to ensure that no item is missed.

If someone suggests a correction to the minutes of the last meeting, the others present should be asked whether they agree the change. If they do, then the correction should be made to the copy that is signed by the meeting's chairman, and the minutes of the current meeting should say: *The minutes of the last meeting were approved subject to the following corrections . . .*

Listen to the discussion and note the points on which the meeting reaches general agreement. If there is a clear split in opinion, summarise both sides. If you are unsure of the conclusions reached or decisions taken on a particular item, then ask the meeting's chairman to summarise the discussion.

Make sure that you check, at the end of each item, who is going to be responsible for what has been agreed. Then make sure that both the action and the person taking it are clearly shown in the minutes.

The PCC as a whole is responsible for the decisions taken at its meetings, but any member can ask to have his/her dissent formally recorded in the minutes.

Minutes are effectively a history of the PCC and as such should normally be written in the past tense. They should be written so as to give someone who was not at the meeting a clear summary of what took place. If it should be necessary, some months or even years after a meeting, to find out what was decided on a particular point, then the minutes should give the answer.

Sections and paragraphs within the minutes should be numbered for easy reference and should have clear headings. Matters discussed in different parts of the meeting can be brought together in the minutes if this makes the record of the meeting more understandable.

Recording the Minutes

Having made notes during the meeting, write up the minutes as soon as possible afterwards, while the proceedings are still fresh in your mind.

When you have written the draft minutes, show them to the meeting's chairman for approval. Then circulate them, in accordance with the arrangements agreed with the PCC. It is a good idea to retain your original notes until the minutes have been approved by the PCC.

The minutes must be retained indefinitely - they are an historical record. There are several ways of ensuring that pages cannot be removed from the minute book, such as numbering pages, or numbering items through the year.

Circulating the Minutes

Copies of the minutes should be sent to each member of the PCC, either with the agenda for the next meeting, or as soon as possible after the meeting (preferably within two weeks), to prompt those responsible for taking action - or both. You must establish with the PCC which arrangements they prefer. In any case, it is a good idea to take spare copies along to the next meeting.

Access to the Minutes

The independent examiner or auditor, the Bishop, Archdeacon and anyone authorized in writing by them may have access to the minutes without the PCC's authority.

Persons on the church electoral roll may have access to the approved minutes of PCC meetings held after the APCM in 1995, except any minutes deemed by the PCC to be confidential.

Unless the minutes have been deposited in the relevant diocesan or county archive, other persons may have access to PCC minutes only in accordance with specific PCC authorization.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Two meetings must be held each year, not later than 30th April. The first is the Vestry Meeting, at which churchwardens are elected; the second is the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). They are usually held one after the other on the same day and at the same venue. The first meeting of the new PCC often takes place immediately after the APCM, to elect the PCC officers.

The Secretary's role for these meetings will be:

- to commission, collect, copy and issue the written reports;
- to draw up and issue the agenda;
- to post the notices;
- to take and distribute the minutes.

The date should be fixed about two months in advance, to allow sufficient time for the electoral roll to be revised.

Notices for the three meetings, in the proper form and signed by the parish priest, must be posted on or near the main church door for a period to include the two Sundays immediately preceding the meeting [CRR 7]. The following notices are available on the Diocesan website:

- Notice of APCM and meeting to elect churchwardens
- Nominations for churchwardens
- Notice of Results of Elections
- Church Electoral Roll Certificate and other electoral roll documents

The independently examined accounts of the PCC for the year ended the preceding 31st December must be posted on or near the main church door for at least seven days before the APCM, including at least one Sunday when the church is used for worship.

The new or revised electoral roll is put up on or near the main church door when complete.

Annual Parish Meeting (often still called a Vestry Meeting)

Anybody on the church electoral roll of the parish, and anybody who lives in the parish and is named on the register of local government electors, is entitled to vote [CRR 6 & 13].

All candidates should be proposed and seconded before the meeting, and should sign the nomination paper to say that they are willing to serve and not disqualified from serving [CRR Supplementary Material]. If there are only two candidates, then the parish priest should propose a motion to appoint the two people proposed.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Only lay persons named on the church electoral roll may attend and take part in the proceedings.

There are different rules for clergy. [CRR 6]

The meeting is chaired by the Incumbent or (if s/he is absent) by the vice-chairman.

It is a good idea for the Secretary to take *CRR* or *A Handbook for Churchwardens and PCCs* to the APCM and Vestry Meeting, to answer any questions about rules and procedure.

Agenda

- Opening prayers
- Apologies
- Approval of minutes of the previous APCM
- Matters arising
- Reports
- Elections and Appointments
- AOB
- Closing prayers

Reports

The APCM shall receive from the PCC and shall be free to discuss [CRR 9]:

- a) a report on changes in the electoral roll since the last APCM;
- b) a report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the parish generally over the year;
- c) a report from the Treasurer on parish finances, including the independently examined accounts of the PCC for the year ended the preceding 31st December;
- d) a report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church(es) in the parish, which will usually be presented and have been prepared by the churchwardens, but will also have been considered by the PCC;
- g) a report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod.

In addition, the House of Bishops Guidelines recommend that the parish safeguarding officer gives a report at the APCM.

Elections and Appointments (in given order) [CRR 10 - 13]

Elections:

- Every three years: Deanery Synod representatives - results must be conveyed to the Diocesan Secretary and Deanery Synod Secretary.
- PCC members - the parish priest should discuss in advance with the PCC and other members of the congregation who might wish to stand for election.

Appointments:

- Sidespersons - the meeting needs to approve the priest and PCC's choice.
- Independent Examiner or Auditor to the PCC - the meeting needs to approve the priest and PCC's choice. S/he must not be a PCC member and must not be nominated or seconded by the Treasurer.

First meeting of the newly-elected PCC

A short meeting will often be held immediately after the APCM, with the sole purpose of electing the church officers:

- Vice-chairman
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Electoral Roll Officer
- Members of the PCC Standing Committee

After the meetings

The names of the new PCC members, Deanery Synod members and churchwardens must be put on the church door for a period of fourteen days.

The annual report and financial statements must be published and displayed in the parish, and also sent within twenty-eight days of the APCM to the Diocesan Secretary for retention by the Board of Finance.

The PCC Secretary will have received from the Diocese some forms, which must be sent back to the Diocesan Secretary after the APCM. These give the names and contact numbers of the church officers and Deanery Synod members. Before returning the completed forms to the Diocese, you will need to seek permission from each person for his or her details to be included in the Diocesan Directory.

The electoral roll officer will have received from the Diocese a form on which the number of names on the electoral roll must be entered. One copy of this form should be returned to the Diocese, once the new or revised roll is complete, and a second copy must be displayed on or near the main church door.

PCC Membership

The Secretary should keep a definitive list of PCC members (name, address, phone, email, type, term). This list should be available for inspection [CRR 11] on reasonable notice by any person resident in the parish or named on the electoral roll, but the Secretary shall not be bound to provide a copy of the list.

The PCC should include [CRR14]:

- All clergy and lay workers licensed to the parish
- Churchwardens
- Readers as decided by APCM
- General / Diocesan / Deanery Synod members
- Elected representatives of the laity
*6 for an electoral roll under 50; 9 for an electoral roll of 51-100; 12 for an electoral roll of 101-200;
15 for an electoral roll of over 200*
- Co-opted members
*two of those elected, or up to one-fifth if that number is greater than two, can be replaced each
year by co-opted members*

The Incumbent is ex-officio chairman of the PCC. The PCC must elect a lay vice-chairman, who will act as chairman in the Incumbent's absence. [CRR 15]

Since 2004, the rule has been that elected PCC members hold office for three years, with one-third retiring and being elected each year. While PCCs change over to this system, those who retire each year are to be selected by lot. The APCM can decide to limit the number of years that a person can serve on the PCC without a break, and for how many years such a person should remain off the PCC before standing for election once again.

Since 2007, the rule has been that churchwardens who have served in the same parish for six successive years are disqualified for the next two years, after which they can be appointed again and the six year period starts afresh.

Deanery Synod representatives are elected for three years.

Sub-committees [CRR15]

The PCC must appoint a Standing Committee of at least five people. The Incumbent and churchwardens are members ex-officio. The PCC must appoint at least another two PCC members, one of whom will normally be the Treasurer. The Standing Committee has the authority to carry out PCC business between PCC meetings, but it is accountable to the PCC.

Although the Standing Committee must be appointed, it need not meet.

The PCC may appoint other committees (e.g. Fabric, Worship, Stewardship, Social Responsibility etc), which may include people who are not on the PCC. The Incumbent is an ex-officio member of all PCC committees.

PCC Meetings [CRR15]

PCCs must hold at least four meetings, spread evenly through the year, in addition to the APCM.

A PCC is quorate i.e. can conduct business, if one-third of its current membership is present.

Three-quarters of the members present at a meeting must consent to the transaction of any item of business not specified on the agenda.

Voting is decided by a simple majority of those members present and voting. The meeting's chairman has a second, or casting vote if necessary.

The meeting may adjourn its proceedings as it sees fit.

Postponed and Emergency Meetings

If a meeting has to be postponed, PCC members must be given written notice of the date of the reconvened meeting within fourteen days of the original meeting date. The chairman, vice-chairman and Secretary or any two of these can decide if a meeting should be postponed.

The chairman may at any time convene a meeting. If at least one-third of the PCC requests a meeting, in writing, and the chairman does not convene it within seven days, then the members may convene the meeting themselves.

Emergency meetings can be convened by the Incumbent or vice-chairman with at least three clear days' notice in writing. The quorum for such a meeting is a majority of PCC members. Only business specified in the notice convening the meeting may be transacted.

For guidance on special parochial church meetings, see CRR 22. For guidance on extraordinary PCC meetings, see CRR 23.

Different Parish Circumstances

The Church Representation Rules make special provision for the PCCs of parishes with more than one place of worship [CRR 18], Joint PCCs [CRR 19], Team councils [CRR 20] and Group councils [CRR 21].

Any Questions?

Please contact the Diocesan Office (024 7652 1200) if you have any questions or require any more information. Office hours are 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.