

GUIDELINES FOR THE WORKING OF THE JOINT PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL 2018

1. What is the role of the Parish Priest in a Parish Pastoral Council?

While he does not chair the PPC, the Parish Priest is the President. By presiding at the meetings of the PPC the Parish Priest brings the authority of the Bishop to the work of the Council.

As Parish Priest he bears the ultimate responsibility for decisions regarding pastoral ministry and the overall mission of the parish. In rare cases he may choose not to follow the advice of the PPC (*Code of Canon Law 536*) but as a member of the PPC he will not readily ignore their advice because he has participated in the prayerful process of making the decision.

He shares his understanding of the pastoral needs of the parish, including his hopes and aspirations for the future. He also enables the members of the Council to exercise and develop their own gifts and together, they recognise and affirm the many gifts and ministries within the parish community.

2. What will be the membership of the Parish Pastoral Council?

There will be 12 members excluding clergy. Six members will constitute a quorum.

3. For what length of time will the pastoral council serve?

Membership of the Pastoral Council will remain constant for a 2 year period. After 2 years, at least one third of the lay members (i.e. 3 members) will retire. The process will be agreed as the 2 year period is reached. On the occasion of the death, or increasing infirmity of any member, the council will decide how to proceed.

4. How will lay members be selected?

The parish must be fully informed, prepared and involved in, the process of selecting the members drawn from the laity of the parish.

Process of selection to the PPC of lay members

Parish Priest

- introduces idea, purpose and proposals for PPC to the parish
- explores with parishioners the qualities and attributes needed by PPC members
- leads a process of prayer, formation and discernment
- invites the parish's involvement through prayer to nominate potential members (themselves or others)
- meets with prospective candidates prior to election to discuss the requirements of a role on the PPC and to ensure that candidates expectations of the role are appropriately set
- if more nominations are received than there are vacancies, invites the parish to elect members from the list of nominees
- if insufficient nominations are received, arranges for further prayer and discernment in order to fill the remaining vacancies, taking account of under-represented areas and the needs of the parish
- communicates the names of the new PPC to the parish and invites the whole parish to support the group with prayers and encouragement and through attendance at the Liturgy of Commissioning during a Parish Mass

5. What are the qualities and skills needed by PPC members?

All should be practising Catholics who participate regularly in the parish Sunday Mass. They must be able to contribute to the work of the PPC and be willing to give the commitment required from a PPC member.

6. Who will be responsible for the work and ongoing development of the PPC?

There will be an executive group, consisting of the Parish Priest, Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. They will be responsible for agreeing the agenda of each meeting, dealing with any urgent business matters which may arise between PPC meetings and the ongoing development of the council.

7. What is the role of the Chairperson?

- Establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the parish priest and develop an understanding of his aspirations for the parish.
- Together with the other members of the executive, prepare the agenda of the PPC meetings
- Ensure that any matters dealt with by the executive group between meetings are reported to the next PPC meeting.
- Run the PPC meetings effectively, ensuring that everyone has a chance to contribute.
- Ensure significant time for prayer and formation is included at meetings to maintain the pastoral focus of the council.
- Provide encouragement and support for council members.
- Establish communications channels within the parish. These channels should ensure that the PPC is in two-way communication with parishioners and all groups within the parish.

8. What is the role of the Secretary?

- Liaise with the Chairperson and other members of the executive group
- Produce and distribute agendas (plus any preparatory reading), at least one week prior to the meeting
- Produce and distribute draft minutes to the Parish Priest and Chairperson for vetting prior to issue.
- Produce and distribute minutes to the PPC members within 10 days of the meeting (NB. Previous meetings minutes will achieve approval at the next meeting)
- Organise meeting place and resources for the meeting, to include refreshments
- Ensure actions and decisions are recorded and circulated to the PPC members within ten days of the meeting, ensuring that a brief summary is made available to the parish at the same time

9. How will appropriate people be assigned to the posts of Chairperson and Secretary?

The PPC will decide through a process of discernment, nomination and election.

The role of the Chairperson is key. He or she must be able to work with the parish priest, and also have the confidence of the whole pastoral council. The appointment of Chairperson should be for two years but by agreement with the members of the PPC, the person may be re-appointed for a further year thereafter. Normally the Chairperson should have at least one year's prior experience as a member of the PPC.

A vice-Chairperson should also be elected to support the Chairperson, and occasionally deputise for him or her – this is a good development role.

A secretary should be appointed by Chair and Vice Chair from within the elected members of the PPC

10. How is the content of the agenda to be decided?

The executive should seek input from:

- individual PPC members
- the parish
- parish groups and organisations
- the deanery
- the wider community (eg Churches Together)

11. How will the PPC ensure that there is a balance between business and ongoing formation in their meetings?

Formation can consist of:

- Ongoing faith enrichment and personal spiritual growth
- Greater knowledge of Church teaching
- Development of group skills to establish an effective team
- Sufficient time needs to be set aside for prayer and reflection, and its priority understood. Responsibility for leading prayer should be taken by different people through the life of the PPC, and a range of individual approaches encouraged.

12. How will decisions generally be made?

The PPC may decide to invite one or more individuals to attend a PPC meeting when additional or specialist advice and information is needed. PPC decisions will be made through working towards consensus, taking account of the views of each member of the Council and arriving at agreement. Majority voting should be used only as a last resort.

13. How often will the PPC meet?

Initially it is recommended that the PPC is being set up it should meet monthly i.e. the first 6 months. After this point in time the meetings should be held bi-monthly.

Dates and times of PPC meetings and their agendas will be publicised in advance. At least twice a year the PPC will organise its meeting agenda to include an 'Open Forum' on a specific topic of relevance to its work for the parish. Parishioners attending 'Open Forum' PPC meetings will be invited to contribute actively to discussion and so inform developing PPC thinking.

14. How will the PPC communicate with the parish?

Ensuring clear, timely and regular communication with the wider parish community will be a priority for the PPC. To achieve this, the parish should be kept informed of the membership of the PPC, be advised of dates for meetings, and be given the opportunity of contributing to the agendas. Parishioners will be given a summary of the outcomes of the PPC meetings through appropriate channels within ten days of a meeting. In addition, members of the PPC should ensure that they are as accessible and well known to their fellow parishioners as possible.