

Durham Martyrs' Parish Council Constitution

- **NAME**

1.1 The name shall be the Durham Martyrs's Parish Council (hereafter PC).

- **AUTHORITY**

2.1 In accord with canon law the PC is presided over by the parish priest (reference Canon 519).

- **PURPOSE**

3.1 The purpose of the PC is: to enable the laity and clergy of the parish to share responsibility for the whole parish life and its relationship with the wider community by:

- discerning the gifts and needs of the parish and community

- co-ordinating the activities of parish groups and organisations

- endeavouring to involve the whole of the parish in the work of the church in response to present and future needs

- being a means of fostering a sense of community in the parish

- being a means of communication between the parish and local church and secular bodies

- appointing representatives to the Pastoral Area Council, Durham Churches Together and other similar bodies.

- to provide an open forum for discussion of parish concerns

- **METHOD**

4.1 The PC may make such rules and procedures as it deems appropriate to further its purpose.

4.2 The PC may set up-both 'standing' and 'ad hoc' committees and prepare their briefs.

- **STRUCTURE OF COUNCIL**

5.1 The PC will be made up of approximately 14 members:

- the clergy of the parish

- up to a maximum of 5 members elected by the parishioners

- 4 foundation members appointed by the clergy

- the chairperson or a member from each of the standing committees (4 in total)

5.2 Nominations:

5.2.1 These will be called for in June each year and all parishioners over 16 years of age are eligible to vote and stand for election.

5.2.2 Having agreed to stand, each nominee should be officially supported by another adult parishioner (see 5.2.1).

5.2.3 If required there will be an election by majority vote of the parishioners as defined in 5.2.1. This will take place by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

5.3 Elected PC members will normally serve for a maximum of three consecutive years.

5.4 For the continuity of the PC it is desirable that terms of office are staggered.

5.5 PC members may be asked to take on specific tasks and responsibilities.

5.6 Co-option of members to the PC

5.6.1 In the event of unexpected vacancies or as required for special reasons additional members may be co-opted on to the PC.

5.6.2 Co-opted members will be appointed by the PC for one year and their appointment will be reviewed annually at the first meeting after the Annual General Meeting (hereafter AGM).

5.6.3 A member cannot, except for exceptional reasons, have his/her co-option renewed for more than three terms of office. One year must elapse before s/he is eligible to serve again.

5.7 Any member failing to attend half the scheduled meetings in a year may be asked if s/he wishes to resign.

5.8 If an elected member resigns, s/he may be replaced by a co-opted member until the next election.

OFFICERS

6.1. The officers of the council shall be The President who will be the parish priest. The Chairperson, the Vice- Chairperson. The Secretary, the Health & Safety Liaison Officer and the Parish Safeguarding Representative. The PC will elect from its members the roles of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.

6.2 The Chairperson.

6.2.1 The chairperson shall be elected at the first meeting of the PC after the AGM to serve for one year.

6.2.2 The chairperson will form an executive with the parish priest and the chairperson of the Maintenance, Finance, Liturgy and Social committees to address extraordinary matters and coordinate the implementation of proposals made by the PC. Its meetings will therefore be ad hoc.

6.2.3 The chairperson is responsible for calling meetings (see 7.2.5 & 7.2.6 for the calling of meetings and 7.2.4 for drawing up the agenda).

6.3 The Vice-Chairperson.

6.3.1 The vice-chairperson shall also be elected at the first meeting of the PC following the AGM and will assume the role of chairperson when the incumbent is not present

6.4 The Secretary.

6.4.1 A secretary who may be a member of the PC, will be appointed by the PC.

6.4.2 The secretary will make arrangements for meetings and elections, take minutes of all meetings and will be responsible for distributing and displaying agenda and minutes

6.4.3 If the secretary is not a member of the PC but is a member of the parish, s/he may speak at meetings of the PC but only vote at special meetings of the parish and the AGM.

6.5 The Health and Safety Liaison Officer.

6.5.1 A Health and Safety liaison officer shall be appointed by the PC.

6.5.2 His/her position will be confirmed annually and reported to the AGM.

6.5.3 S/he will be an ex officio member of the maintenance committee but also report directly to the PC when necessary.

6.5.4 S/he will be responsible to the PC for the proper implementation of the Parish Health and Safety Policy

6.6 The Parish Safeguarding Representative

6.6.1 – In line with the Catholic Church's national safeguarding policies which have been formulated by the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) and agreed by the Bishops of England and Wales, a Parish Safeguarding Representative will be nominated by the parish priest and appointed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator.

6.6.2 S/he will be responsible to the Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator to ensure the implementation of the Church's national safeguarding policies within the parish and may advise and report to the Parish Council on safeguarding matters as necessary. Full roles and responsibilities are available at <http://www.csaprocedures.uk.net>

PC MEETINGS

7.1 Minutes of all meetings must be carefully recorded and retained.

7.2 Ordinary Meetings.

7.2.1 Those entitled to attend are: all PC members, the secretary and any invited member of the parish

7.2.2 The minutes together with the date of the next meeting should be displayed for the parish and distributed to PC members and chairpersons of standing committees by the secretary giving due notice.

7.2.3 Prior to each meeting, the parish priest, chairperson of the PC and secretary shall draw up an agenda, having first enquired if any PC members wish to submit an item.

7.2.4 The agenda for meetings must be displayed for the Parish, three Sundays prior to meeting and opportunity given for parishioners to suggest items. The agenda to be sent to members by the secretary at least 48 hours before meetings.

7.2.5 Meetings shall be called approximately four times a year.

7.2.6 A quorum constitutes half the PC.

7.2.7 All PC members have a vote. The parish priest has a casting vote.

7.2.8 Venue of meetings to rotate around each church.

7.3 Special Parish Meeting.

7.3.1 A special meeting may be called by the parish priest or chairperson, or by request in writing to the chairperson of four parishioners specifying the reason for such a meeting.

7.3.2 Business will be kept strictly to the matter for which the meeting was called.

7.3.3 Any resolutions put forward by such a meeting will be considered by the PC at their next meeting.

7.3.4 In the event the PC at the next meeting cannot agree on the resolution the matter shall go to arbitration via the Bishop's office. The decision of the arbitrator will be binding on the PC.

7.4 Annual General Meeting.

7.4.1 The meeting will normally be called in June.

7.4.2 It is incumbent upon the PC to organize the business of the meeting, and see that the election of new members is conducted in a proper manner.

7.4.3 Six weeks' notice of the date and time of the meeting should be given to the parish.

7.4.4 The constitution, together with the agenda, should be displayed during the two weeks prior to the AGM.

7.4.5 All parishioners are entitled to attend.

7.4.6 A quorum is 35 parishioners at the start of the meeting.

7.4.7 The following business will be conducted:

Opening Prayers.

The Chairperson's report and thanks to retiring members.

Financial report and statement of accounts.

Reports by committee chairpersons.

Other reports as required by PC chairperson.

Amendments to the constitution if any.

Results of parish ballot for PC members.

Announcement of current membership of committees.

Close of meeting by parish priest.

7.4.8 The newly constituted PC shall meet within 14 days of the AGM.

7.5 Parishioners' Concerns.

Parishioners who wish to have particular issues discussed by the PC should speak to the parish priest or any other member of the PC who will then arrange with the chairperson of the PC for the matter to be discussed at an appropriate meeting of the PC.

• AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

8.1 Proposed amendments, duly seconded, must be presented either by the PC or in writing by the proposer to the chairperson of the PC not less than six weeks before the AGM for consideration by the PC, so that they can be formally included and published with the agenda for the AGM

8.2 A written draft of the amendment should be available and on display for parishioners with the agenda two weeks before the AGM.

8.3 Such amendments, duly proposed and seconded by parishioners, may be approved at the AGM by a majority vote of the AGM.

• STANDING COMMITTEES

9.1 A standing committee of the PC shall be of a permanent nature and its function will be defined by the PC whose chairperson together with the standing committee's chairperson will regularly review its terms of reference (TOR) and have any changes approved by the PC within the terms of canon law.

9.2 Each standing committee will fulfil its function in accordance with its TOR and any further requests received from the PC.

9.3 The parish priest and chairperson of the PC will be ex officio members of all standing committees.

9.4 There will be 4 standing committees of the PC:

9.4.1 Finance

9.4.2 Maintenance including the Health and Safety Officer

9.4.3 Liturgy (covering First Communion, Confirmation, Easter, Christmas services etc)

9.4.4 Social (including fundraising)

9.5 Membership of Standing Committees

9.5.1 Parishioners with suitable skills will be sought to serve on the standing committees.

9.5.2 Each standing committee will, after each AGM, elect its own chairperson who will be approved by the PC.

9.5.3 The term of office of the chairperson of a standing committee is for one year but with no limit to the number of terms that can be served although it is recommended that it should be for no longer than 5 years.

9.5.4 There should be at least 4 other members of each standing committee, one of whom will be a current member of the PC.

9.5.5 Additional members may be co-opted for special projects.

9.5.6 Any parishioner may offer his/her services as a member of a standing committee at any time during the year. The offer may be made by a request to the PC chairperson or the standing committee chairperson or to the parish priest so that it may be considered by the PC and the relevant committee.

9.5.7 The membership of standing committees will be reported to the parish AGM.

9.6 Each standing committee shall determine the method of working to meet its responsibilities.

Every effort should be made so that the venue of meetings to rotate around each church

9.7 Each standing committee should provide reports of matters in hand or proposed as follows.

9.7.1 The minutes of each meeting will be made available to the PC.

9.7.2 PC meetings: a report from the PC representative and the chairperson of each standing committee will be expected (ideally in person) for all PC meetings and these reports will be published with the PC minutes. Where an issue is required to be discussed, the committee report should be available for circulation with the PC agenda.

9.7.3 For the parish AGM: a written report should be submitted to the PC chairman four weeks in advance of the AGM so that it may be considered by the PC and published two weeks in advance of the AGM with the agenda.

9.7.4 The committee chairperson or his/her deputy will be present at the AGM to answer questions on the committee's annual report if required.

9.8 Finance Reporting by Standing Committees

9.8.1 Each year in December each standing committee should present budgets or expected outgoings which are to be funded by the parish to the finance committee for approval, covering the period 1st April to 31st March of the following year.

9.8.2 Expenditure for the same period in the preceding year, 1st April to 31st March, will be reported in the parish accounts presented at the AGM.