

SIMPLIFICATION OF GOVERNANCE

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Why change? What is the point of this change?** The short answer is that church attendance and the number of clergy has fallen over recent years, the number of PCCs remains unchanged and expectations of governance have grown. There is duplication of work and responsibilities within a benefice. Finding PCC officers is a struggle in many places. Clergy and lay time is disproportionately being taken up in governance rather than service and mission.
- 2. What are the benefits?** Working more closely together, building trust, supporting one another and better communication. Safeguarding: better, more coordinated oversight. One place for and set of documents for legal/statutory requirements. Economies of time, scale and potentially cost. Laity have more time for local activities rather than meetings. Maintains local engagement with building, events and care. Multi parish benefices are harder to appoint to.
- 3. What are the challenges?** Growing in a wider loyalty than one's own church. Potential impact on giving. Greater burden on PCC officers. Enhancing administration across the benefice. Building trust.
- 4. What kind of support would be provided for this process?** Such changes necessarily involve a Pastoral Scheme which would be run by the diocesan Pastoral Secretary with support from the Archdeacon. They would guide and lead parishes through the process.
- 5. How would the changes affect the status of our churches?** You have a choice when the scheme is made as to which churches you want to keep as Parish Churches (you can have more than one Parish Church in a parish) and which you want to move to just being a church. There are fewer obligations on churches that are not Parish Churches.
- 6. How would the changes affect Churchwardens?** Every Parish Church usually has two Churchwardens. A Chapel of Ease does not need Churchwardens. Where a parish has more than one parish church two Churchwardens can be appointed for each parish church or the scheme which unites the parishes to create one parish can also detail that there will only be 2 churchwardens for the parish or there will be 1 churchwarden for each parish church etc. which helps to keep the numbers manageable if that is the issue. All the Churchwardens are Churchwardens of the whole parish except so far as they may arrange to perform separate duties in relation to particular churches in the parish.

7. **Who would be on the new PCC?** There is some flexibility here. Representatives may be elected from each church/former parish¹ and this may help as a starting point for a new PCC. Wherever they come from, members of the new PCC should understand their role as being to lead and manage the whole of the new parish. All licensed clergy are members. Churchwardens are ex officio members (this also may affect how many Churchwardens you think it is suitable to have). Deanery Synod representatives are members.²
8. **What happens with the Electoral Roll?** There is one ER for a parish. Parishioners can be asked whether they would like to declare their affiliation to one or more church by virtue of residence and/or habitual worship, which would be noted on the ER.
9. **What happens with the finances of each church?** The new PCC will be responsible for overall financial controls, spending and reporting. However restricted funds remain restricted to the named church.
10. **Will our CMF contribution change?** Each parish's CMF contribution is worked out on the basis of two factors: the socio-economic assessment of the parish and the Community of Worshipers (CoW) total. Combining the parishes may change the overall socio-economic band. Combining the CoW figures may result in the 'large congregation' reduction being applied.
11. **Will our pattern of services be affected?** The pattern of services in a parish is the responsibility of the incumbent working with the PCC. It is likely that the pattern agreed for a multi parish benefice would not be affected by the change to becoming a single parish, as the pattern is normally dependent on the preferences of each local church, priorities for growth and what the ministry team can support.
12. **What is a Church Steward?** Whilst not a formal title or position, where a parish finds it helpful and appropriate, one or more people in a church could be identified as Church Stewards. A Church Steward being someone who they themselves and whose local church are happy to be contacted due to their committed care for their local church and who take a degree of responsibility and accountability for it.
13. **How would this affect baptisms, weddings and funerals?** There need be no changes to where and how these happen.
14. **What would happen to the patronage?** This is worked out in the pastoral scheme. Usually the existing patrons would become patrons of the new parish (should they so choose), though it is slightly different where the Crown is one of the patrons.

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¹ See 8 'What happens with the ER?'

² For further details see Church Representation Rules M15(1)

