



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

Registered Charity No. 278742

Diocesan Policy on PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

This reviewed policy is promulgated by episcopal decree on the 8th of May 2026 following consultation with Council of Priests on the 26th of March 2026 and the College of Consultors on the 18th of March 2026.

“If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity.”

“A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.”

(Can. 536 §1-2)

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1. It is diocesan policy that every parish must have an effective Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). This is in addition to the canonical requirement that every parish have a Parish Finance Committee (*Can. 537*), organised in accordance with the Diocesan Parish Handbook.
- 1.2. In order to fully live out their missionary role of announcing the Gospel, giving witness to the person of Jesus Christ, parishes require a synodal openness to listening and mutual understanding amidst all the baptised which can support and advise those ordained ministers entrusted with the pastoral care of a community in parish planning and decision-making. (*Christifideles Laici*, §9, cf. *Can. 205*).
- 1.3. With a consultative rather than executive voice, the PPC facilitates the active participation of the whole parish community in contributing to the life and mission of the Church, seeking a way of consensus wherever possible in matters concerning the life, worship, and witness of the parish community, with ordained ministers and lay faithful working together in partnership.

2. NORMS FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

- 2.1. By the promulgation of this policy, all existing Constitutions or Standing Orders for each Parish Pastoral Council, Parish-in-Council or equivalent in parishes of the Diocese of East Anglia are abrogated.
- 2.2. Members of the PPC are to be appointed by the Parish Priest following consultation among the wider parish. This should not be in the form of an election but could be a general invitation to the community to suggest names discreetly to the parish priest for his consideration. Appointees should be people who have shown commitment to the mission of the church, can collaborate fruitfully, and who clearly understand their role as to support the parish priest in his good governance of the parish which includes appropriately reinforcing proper expectations.
 - 2.2.1. The number of appointed members of the PPC should be no less than six members, taking into consideration the relative size of the parish, but must not exceed twelve.
 - 2.2.2. Members are appointed for a term of three years and are eligible for reappointment.
 - 2.2.3. With just cause, the Parish Priest is able to dismiss a member of the PPC, and a newly appointed Parish Priest may review the membership of the PPC.
 - 2.2.4. All clergy in active ministry in a parish are, *ex officio*, members of the PPC.
 - 2.2.5. Other parish office holders are not *ex officio* members however the Parish Priest may wish to appoint them as such. It is laudable that parish office holders, from time to time, are invited to attend meetings at which their expertise is beneficial.
- 2.3. The Parish Priest presides over meetings of the PPC, is responsible for calling meetings, and should always be present. As a norm, the PPC should not meet without the Parish Priest, and no decisions are to be implemented without his ratification.
- 2.4. The PPC meets at least quarterly but preferably meets more often. At least one meeting each year should be open to the whole parish (a parish A.G.M.), and the Parish Priest may call additional meetings of the whole parish, for example in cases where a significant or urgent matter is to be discussed.

- 2.5. The quorum of a PPC is half its total members.
- 2.6. The PPC elects a lay chairperson from amongst its members. A secretary is also appointed who is responsible for taking and circulating minutes of meetings. A record of the minutes of PPC meetings should be kept, in the parish office, for at least six years. After this period, they should be archived.
- 2.7. The Parish Priest should liaise with the chairperson to establish an agenda which should normally focus on key pastoral issues rather than reports from parish groups, committees and organisations.
- 2.8. If, in the judgement of the Bishop or of the Parish Priest (with the agreement of the Bishop), the PPC ceases to operate in the best interests of the parish, the Council will be temporarily suspended by the Parish Priest. The Council will then be reconstituted within three months of any such suspension.
- 2.9. In the case of an absence of a Parish Priest, for any reason, the PPC is held in abeyance and the Vicar Forane, at the Bishop's discretion, will provide guidance to the chairperson regarding the formation of an interim working group to assist the governance of the parish until a new priest is appointed.