



How to ...

Run a productive PCC

PCCs vary hugely according to the size and type of church. Most members however have only belonged to one PCC so they assume that the way they work is common to all churches. While this guide does not argue for uniformity it does outline some principles which, if applied, can transform the effectiveness of a PCC and its church. The following principles were developed by John Truscott¹ who states that all PCCs need:

- a clear purpose
- a big agenda
- an effective team

Clear purpose

The PCC, a legally constituted body, exists to serve the church, so its agenda should be driven by the church's vision and purpose – what it exists for in this place at this time. (If the church has not thought about this for a while then perhaps the PCC should initiate some discussion on this point.) When the purpose of the church is clear then the activities of the council can be aligned to this: Council members will understand their role as trustees serving the church to bring about change rather than seeing membership as some kind of status; they will concentrate on leadership rather than fighting for their corner of church life. Meetings will be purposeful; looking at budgets and performance rather than reporting on spending and past activities. New members will know what they are signing up for and training for roles can be offered if need be.

Big agenda

A big agenda is not necessarily a long agenda! A big agenda concentrates on the big-picture overview of all of church life. Relating to the purpose of the church every agenda item will have at its core a question about where Christ is and how it enhances His mission. This will involve making God's will the priority in everything, not just starting and ending in prayer. It will mean seeing each agenda item in a 'future' context and thinking about what the Council can do to bring about change. It will mean a fight to keep trivia at bay and detailed business being delegated to the Standing Committee or other small groups. It will be important to keep the whole church in touch with the big agenda and ways found to maintain effective two-way communication.

Effective team

Rather than seeing the Council as a group which meets four or perhaps more times a year it will be seen as a clergy/lay team that exists 24/7. This will entail starting at the annual meeting (when the new team is formed) and giving time to building the team. This will involve praying together and maybe using the skills of a facilitator who understands team-working. The team is seeking to achieve something for Christ together so members will need to display and model love for the Body of Christ and also grow in personal discipleship through Council service. Ideally the team should be relatively small (Jesus chose twelve) and have awareness of the different roles needed in a fully functioning team. Diversity will be embraced because everyone brings something fresh to the team. There will be agreed methods on how to take decisions and if necessary there will be time spent outside meetings to do work which the whole team does not need to be involved in.

Some practical pointsⁱⁱ

- Meetings need a tidy room which is large enough for people to face each other (round a table if possible) but small enough so that everyone can hear what is being said and play a full part.
- The minutes of each meeting need to be sent to members as soon after the meeting as possible to give them time to do what they agreed before the next meeting.
- The PCC may want to publish more widely a summary of the key points discussed to keep the congregation in touch with PCC business.
- Given the need to maintain good communication between the church and PCC the Standing Committee may meet to compile the agenda to ensure best use of the meeting time.
- Use of an agenda template is fine as long as each agenda item is needed and any that are not relevant are erased.
- The agenda needs to be distributed to members at least a week before the meeting to allow for preparation time.
- Encourage people to arrive early (or have a deliberate space at the start) for refreshment and conversation so that the sense of team is reinforced.
- Allow for times of quiet reflection and prayer when difficult points are reached in the meeting.
- Be aware of those who talk too much or who need encouragement to speak to enable all necessary contributions to be received.
- Do not avoid conflict and don't be frightened by expressed passion. But, keep an eye on the tone of the conversation and challenge any behavior which threatens to cause anyone harm.
- When subgroups are formed make sure they have a clear brief including: who can be on it; what they are seeking to do; what responsibilities they have; what the timescales are.
- The item, common to many PCCs, 'Any Other Business' should be banned. If it does exist then items should be raised ahead of the meeting, discussion about these items should be minimal and no decisions expected.
- All PCCs are charities so each member of a Parochial Church Council is a charity trustee. A booklet outlining the roles and responsibilities of trustees is available.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The minimum age for a PCC member is 16, and they are full trustees from this age.
- Have ready for the Annual Meeting a 'job description' for PCC members in order to help potential members consider whether they are being called to this ministry.

Written By George Rendell

Further Information

ⁱ <http://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Articles/Mission-shaped-Church-Councils>

ⁱⁱ There are books available covering much of this including the legal aspects:

- An ABC for the PCC by John Pitchford published by Continuum ISBN 0826465994 a
- Practical Church Management by James Behrens Published by Gracewing ISBN 0852446020.
- Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councilors Published by Continuum ISBN 0826481531.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.parishresources.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Trustee-booklet-v2.pdf>