

PARISH ADMINISTRATION GROUP

Finance and Building

St. Mary's Axminster – St. Michael & St. George Lyme Regis St. Augustine's Seaton

GENERAL

In accordance with Canon 537 every parish must have a Finance Committee to assist the Parish Priest in the administration of the goods of the parish. The Constitution of the Finance Committee is governed by universal canon law and by norms laid down by the Bishop.

The following sets out the fundamental framework for Parish Finance Committees in the Diocese of Plymouth. It establishes its status, ways of working and its right and duties.

CONSTITUTION

Role of the Parish Priest

Although the Parish Priest, or his equivalent is not a member of the Parish Finance Committee, since he cannot be a member of a body consultative to himself, he will always preside at its meetings, unless by way of exception he gives permission for the Committee to meet in his absence.

Membership

- a) Any assistant clergy formally assigned to pastoral duties within the parish as ex officio members.
- b) At least three lay Catholics, in full communion with the Church, appointed by the Parish Priest. These members:
 - Shall include the Treasurer and Gift Aid Organiser;
 - At least one person to represent property;
 - Shall be appointed for three years, but be eligible for re-appointment;
 - May resign but another person must be appointed for the remainder of his/her term;
 - Shall include one who is nominated as Secretary or Correspondent. He/she shall keep a Minute Book.
 - Shall automatically retire upon the change of appointment of the Parish Priest.

Quorum

A quorum for meetings is three, one of whom should be the Parish Priest, unless he has given his permission for the meeting to be held in his absence.

Chairman

The Chairman of the Committee shall be appointed from amongst its number by the Parish Priest and shall not be the same person as the Chairman of any Parish Pastoral Council.

Consultative Status

Subject to the requirements of canon law and diocesan regulations issued by the Bishop the Parish Priest is the administrator of the temporal goods of the parish (Canon 532). In civil law he is the agent for the Plymouth Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered.

The Parish Finance Committee is a consultative body to help the Parish Priest in the sound administration of the temporal goods of the parish. To this end members shall have available to them a copy of:

- The Parish Administration Manual;
- The Parish Finance Committee Constitution;
- The latest completed Parish Financial Return;
- The annual budget.

Information for the Members

Members shall be informed:

- a) Of the fact that a parish is part of the particular Church which is the Diocese of Plymouth (Canon 369) and is governed by universal canon law and local norms issued by the Bishop.
- b) that the assets of all parishes and the Diocese are vested in Plymouth Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered, a trust corporation.
- c) That all expenditure incurred by the Diocese or its constituent parishes must lie within at least one of the objects of the Plymouth Diocesan Trust Deed which can be briefly summarised as follows:
 - the provision of churches, presbyteries and schools
 - the advancement of the Roman Catholic religion
 - the provision of religious services
 - the education and training of priests
 - the maintenance and support of priests;

- d) That the Plymouth Diocesan Trust is registered with the Charity Commission as a charity under number 213227 and that as a consequence there are limitations imposed by the law of the land on the types of investments which can be held or bank accounts used;
- e) That the Diocesan Trustees need to have their accounting requirements observed so that they can demonstrate to the appropriate secular authorities such as the Charity Commission, the Inland Revenue and, if necessary, the courts that they have been proper custodians of parish property and money.
- f) That in carrying out their responsibilities the Parish Priest is the agent of the Diocesan Trustees;
- g) That no parish is allowed to go into debt without the express written consent of the Diocesan Trustees acting through the Episcopal Vicar for Financial Administration;
- h) of the terms of the mandate relating to the parish bank account and the signatories to the account;
- i) That the Committee members are not subject to liability either individually or corporately.

Ordinary Meetings

There shall be at least three ordinary meetings in the course of the year.

- a) To prepare the budget
 - prior to preparing a budget the Parish Finance Committee should hear the pastoral priorities for the parish as decided by the Parish Priest (after he has consulted with the Parish Pastoral Council).
 - it would then be the duty of the Parish Finance Committee to prepare the budget to accommodate as many of the Parish Priest's priorities as possible, also taking into account any additional norms issued by the Bishop or with his approval;
 - the budget would then be presented to the Parish Priest for final approval (after he has consulted with the Parish Pastoral Council).
- b) To measure progress regarding the budget
- c) To approve the accounts.

Notice of Meetings

Seven days' notice is required unless a shorter time is agreed by all the members.

Rights and Duties of the Committee

Accounts:

- a) The accounts shall be made available for inspection at every ordinary meeting of the committee.
- b) The annual accounts must be published to the parish.
- c) In addition to the Parish Priest the Treasurer shall sign the annual return to be to the Vicariate for Administration after it has been agreed by the committee as a true account of the financial status of the parish.

Minutes

- a) The secretary shall keep a record of the minutes in which are recorded both the Minutes of the meeting and the names and addresses of the members.
- b) The Minutes shall be made available to the Bishop or his delegates.

Property

The Committee shall:

- a) advise the Parish Priest on the maintenance of parish property.
- b) assist the Parish Priest in the preparation of either an inventory of the private personal property of the clergy in parish property (including the presbytery) or of parish furniture and equipment and other items in parish property so that such inventory can be deposited in a safe place within the parish office.
- c) assist in arranging for any valuable items belonging to the parish to be photographed as record for insurance purposes and, if any such item is thought to be worth more than £5,000 having it professionally valued.
- d) assist the Parish Priest in observing his obligation to ensure that all procedures for the property administration of the deed of covenant and of the Gift Aid scheme as laid down in the Parish Administration Manual are observed.
- e) assist the Parish Priest in observing his obligation to ensure that details of all legacies are notified to the Diocesan Trustees through the Episcopal Vicar for Administration.

Relationship with the Diocesan Finance Committee

- a) The names and addresses of the members of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Diocesan Finance Office annually when the accounts are submitted.

- b) The Finance Office shall be informed if a new Secretary is appointed in the course of a year.
- c) A copy of the Constitution of the Parish Finance Committee shall be sent to the Vicariate for Administration.
- d) The members of the Committee shall be consulted about applications to the Diocesan Finance Committee:-
 - to carry out projects costing more than £5,000 in any one year
 - for permission to lease, sell, demolish or structurally alter parish property
 - for permission to appoint an approved architect or other building Professionals
 - for permission to borrow from the Diocese for any specific purpose
 - Applications for permissions shall be accompanied by a brief statement of the Result of the consultation signed by the Parish Priest and one member of the Committee.

Consultation

- a) The Parish Priest shall consult the Finance Committee about any substantial expenditure other than routine expenditure.
- b) It is not necessary for the Parish Priest to consult the Committee regarding the schools, this is the responsibility of the Governors. He shall however keep the Finance Committee informed.
- c) The Committee shall be invited and encouraged to comment upon any possible economies, or better means of making regular purchases which will benefit the parish.