

# SUGGESTIONS FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS OR LEADERSHIP GROUPS

## INTRODUCTION

The following is written to support parishes as they set up Pastoral Councils or leadership group/teams in response to the Diocesan Vision and Mission (see below) as part of strategies to become missionary parishes, called for by Archbishop Bernard.

Below, there are some suggested frameworks for what a group might look like. The structure of a PPC/leadership group is primarily to serve the Vision, therefore if one model does not seem to be working, an alternative could be tried which might better utilise the resources and gifts of a particular parish.

## WHY A PPC/LEADERSHIP GROUP?

In his pastoral letter from Lent 2024, Archbishop Bernard asked for deaneries and parishes to set up such councils or leadership groups to help implement our Vision and to build on the Synodal Pathway which began in 2021 - with all sharing responsibility for the mission of our Archdiocese:

*"They will help us prepare for a closer working together of neighbouring parishes, with the likelihood of fewer clergy, the possible merger of parishes and the likely need to close some of our churches in the years ahead. Through our baptism we all have a share in the Priesthood of Christ and that invests in all of us a responsibility for the future of the Church."*

As the Archbishop wrote, recent changes to our deaneries and parish structures require the involvement of both clergy and lay-people, so that the restructuring does not become an end in itself, but helps to support a culture of mission.

The Church is also careful to guide us in the purpose and responsibilities of pastoral councils, in what they should do but also where their limits are, in order that they seek to build God's Kingdom.

## DIOCESAN VISION

*We are called to be a Catholic diocese which is:  
faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ  
full of missionary disciples who work together  
co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith,  
joyful in their service of God and neighbour.*

## DIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT

*To support and mobilise all in the diocese  
to become true missionary disciples.*

## DIOCESAN VISION THEMES

*Evangelisation, Formation, Liturgy & Worship, Social  
Outreach (with a focus on Young People & Families  
and Co-Responsibility across these four themes)*



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM  
OFFICE *for* MISSION  
*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."*



*[The following models are taken from the document "A Guide to Setting Up a parish Shared Leadership Team" written by the Diocese of Salford, and is used with permission. Some edits to remove information specific to Salford have been made.]*

## MODEL 1 – PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

### How is the group recruited?

The parish priest can decide upon the appropriate method of selecting members that is suited to their own particular situation. Some of these options include:

- Elections by the parish community
- Nomination and discernment
- Selection of representatives from parish organisations
- Selection by the parish priest in consultation with the present council members
- Persons who have completed an appropriate lay leadership course & take on a specific responsibility

### How do the meetings run?

The parish priest convokes the meeting. The chairperson prepares the agenda and facilitates the meeting but does not have executive powers in the parish. The agenda for each meeting will be finalised by the secretary, chairperson and the president of the Council and should be circulated to Council members in advance of the meeting, together with any notes or other relevant material required. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated at an agreed time after the meeting has taken place. A period of time should be set on the agenda for prayer and reflection.

### How many people are in the group and what are their roles?

Between 9 to 12 members. There must be a president (parish priest), chairperson (elected by the council) and secretary (responsible for circulating minutes and agendas). Additional committees may be set up to focus on liturgy, pastoral works and social events and fundraising.

### How often do they meet and for how long?

Some parishes may wish to meet monthly while others may choose less frequent meetings. The suggested minimum requirement for meeting is four times a year. Meetings can be between 1 and 2 hours depending on needs.

### What are the group's responsibilities?

- Fostering the sacramental, liturgical and prayer life of the parish.
- Supporting marriage and family life.

- Enabling the lay faithful to carry out their particular vocation of shaping society in accordance with the Gospel.
- Strengthening commitment to social justice and caring for the poor & marginalised.
- Encourage the leadership in initiatives reaching out to young people and engaging them in their journey of faith.
- Look for ways of welcoming new members into their communities to ensure that people of different nationalities and cultures find their place in liturgy and parish life.
- Addressing creatively the particular social challenges of the parish and ensuring that the parish community is sensitive to the needs of all.
- Prayerfully discovering the parish needs and involving everyone in a response.
- Enabling the baptised to discover their call as Disciples of Christ.
- Providing the necessary structures that will marry the needs of the parish with the many gifts and resources of the community.
- Ensuring that all voices within the parish and community are heard and respected.
- Reviewing the life and activities of the parish so that these are seen to foster the Mission of the Church.

#### How long should people remain in the group?

All members of the Parish Pastoral Council are to have terms of office. Ideally the term should be no shorter than two years and no more than four years initially, with the possibility of reappointment for one or more terms, according to the needs of each parish. If this is the case then it needs to be stated how many times the person may be reappointed - the period of time in between appointments also needs to be stated. The parish might consider having staggered terms to maintain a minimum of stability and efficiency.

# MODEL 2 – PARISH ADVISORY & CO-ORDINATION TEAM

## How is the group recruited?

- One way is to have a parish census and ask parishioners which area of parish life they feel drawn to contribute to and if they would be prepared to be a coordinator for this particular area if chosen.
- The parish priest, with help of two or three parishioners looks at the responses and chooses people based on the forms and other information and factors e.g. representative balance from different parts and backgrounds within the parish.
- Another way is to call a series of meetings and bring together all those involved in different areas of parish life and then discern in a similar way.
- It is not an elected body.

## How do the meetings run?

Once every two months there is a whole group meeting chaired by one of the parishioners. After opening prayer, apologies, and opening comments from parish priest, each person gives some feedback on their particular area of responsibility with opportunity for discussion. Other items are discussed that affect the whole parish.

The other month each member of the group has a half hour meeting with the parish priest to discuss that area of the parish and share ideas, and he offers thoughts of how best to support and develop. These are very important and often productive meetings. Generally, lines of communication are kept open so emails and post can be redirected to the right person to deal with.

## How many people are in the group and what are their roles?

Around 12/13 covering different areas of parish life eg:

- Buildings
- Children & Young people
- Churches Together / inter faith dialogue
- Finance
- Liturgy & Music
- Outreach / Hope in the Future
- Pastoral
- Prayer
- Safeguarding (not to share confidential information in this meeting)
- Social

## How often do they meet and for how long?

Whole group meets once every two months, lasting two hours.  
Individual meetings half an hour each/every other month.

## What are the group's responsibilities?

To co-ordinate the people and activities in their particular area of parish life.

## How long can people remain in the group?

Preferably after 2 yrs there should be a swap over year and people replace themselves.

## MODEL 3 – PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM

### How is the group recruited?

- The Priest chooses the team from personal knowledge of the parish with three main areas of responsibility in mind – safeguarding, formation, administration & finance.
- The Leadership Team is made up of suitably formed lay leaders.

### How is the wider parish involved?

*"At the start of the amalgamation process all three churches were invited to an open parish assembly. After a time of prayer and opening remarks from the parish priest, parishioners were invited to choose one of the six key areas below they felt called to. Each of the groups was chaired by a lay leader who explained the remit of each subgroup and each group discussed ideas and short term/long term goals and fed back to the wider group. This involved over 70 people so people felt listened to and included. It also helped in bringing the new parish together, allowed people to get to know each other and express any concerns about the future." (A Parish Priest)*

### How do the meetings run?

Lay leaders collaborate with the parish priest in key areas of the parish as well as discussion on wider whole parish issues.

### How many people are in the group and what are their roles?

Six lay people plus the parish clergy.

### How often do they meet and for how long?

Every six weeks for two hours.

### What are the group's responsibilities?

- Finance & Administration
- Safeguarding (advisory role – not to share confidential information in this meeting)
- Outreach (youth, refugees, homeless etc)
- Formation (catechesis, sacramental programmes etc)
- Liturgy (readers & Eucharistic ministers training & rotas, music, liturgical calendar)
- Social Events
- Communications (website, newsletter)

### How long can people remain in the group?

It is advised that a new team is formed every two years to share the responsibility and to allow others to be involved.

## MODEL 4 – SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)

Taken from *Divine Renovation* (Fr James Mallon) and used in a number of DR Parishes worldwide



### 8 steps to creating a SLT

- 1) Realise that you can't do it on your own, there is a better way.
- 2) Seek wise council and get help. Discern who would be best on your team. There should be a balance of strengths, personalities and backgrounds. Another tool to forming a balanced team is to ask:
  - a. Are they more of a 'people' or 'task' person
  - b. When they work with others do they tend to ask or tell? The four balanced styles are: Analytical, Amiable, Driver & Expressive.
- 3) Make a decision - collectively help make the best decisions for the parish.
- 4) Choose your people based on the following. Do they have? - **i)** Unanimity of vision **ii)** Balance of strengths **iii)** Healthy in conflict and trust **iv)** Vulnerability.
- 5) Tell them what they are committing to, the expectations. Each member should be Faithful, Available, Contagious, and Teachable (FACT).
- 6) Start - pick times and dates and jump in. Try to keep meetings regular and put in the diary a year in advance.
- 7) Have great meetings. Have fun and don't worry about healthy conflict.
- 8) Support the people on your leadership team.

### How many people are in the group and what are their roles?

- Made up of between 4 and 6 members (including Parish Priest).
- Responsible for strategically driving forward the Parish Vision and empower subgroups to thrive in their ministry.
- Based on the principle '**TEAM** - Together **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore' and the realisation that the priest can't do it alone.
- Uses the Clifton *Strengthsfinder* ([www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/](http://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/)) to review your team and put into 4 areas (executing, influencing, relationship building & strategic thinking).
- Listen to the parish – find out their experience of the parish and ideas for the future. This will help in developing a vision statement and making a 'game plan'.

### How often do they meet and for how long?

- Meet each week for around 2 hours.

More information at [www.divinerenovation.net/](http://www.divinerenovation.net/) or *Divine Renovation Guidebook*