



# **Parish Councillors pack**

**Anglican Diocese of Bendigo**

**2017**

Any feedback or suggestions please contact

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## This pack contains:

1. An introduction to the Role of Parish Councillors - **Please read first**
2. A copy of the Parish Administration Act 2010 (Amended 2016)
3. The Parish Administration Policy Handbook (Revised 2017)
4. Code of Practice for Congregations: The Joys and Responsibilities of being a Christian in this Parish  
*A document developed and adopted by the Diocese to assist congregation to encourage harmonious relationships.*
5. Being Together: A General Synod statement on congregational values
6. Faithfulness in Service: A Code of Practice for church workers and leaders  
*Adopted by General Synod. Primarily developed for clergy and ministry related staff, but now being extended to volunteers in a number of categories in parishes. (Please see Diocesan policy document Lay Authorisations and Required Checks)*
7. A Parish Council Covenant  
*This comes from Church Consultant Tim Dyer*
8. Lay Authorisations policy



# The Role of Parish Councillors

## Introduction

Welcome to being elected or appointed a Parish Council member in the Diocese of Bendigo. It is a position of significant responsibility and leadership in your parish/congregation. It is a position of trust and is a reflection of the goodwill and esteem in which you are held.

From Annual Meetings in 2017 Parish Councils are being elected/appointed for a period of three years. This has come about due to a decision by the Diocesan Synod in 2016. The decision was made to:

- Make for more effective governance of parishes
- To simplify the process for National Police Checks and Working with Children Checks and restrict the amount of administration
- To enable greater continuity of Parish Council

Any Parish Councillor for various reasons can resign at any time and be replaced.

The Church is the Body of Christ on earth and the role of Parish Councillors, above all else, is to see that the part of the body to which they belong is in good health.

*Jesus told us to love one another as he loves us. As Christians we know our life together is strengthened when our behaviour is consistent with our faith. However our experience of being together can be challenging, particularly when there are differences. So it is important to be clear about what is loving, appropriate behaviour towards each other (Being Together)*

This pack is designed to help you in your role as a Parish Councillor

**The duties and responsibilities of a Parish Councillor as set down in the Parish Administration Act are:**

- 6.1 In order to further the mission of God in the Diocese, Parish Councils have responsibility for the following matters:
- (a) to ensure that clear and achievable goals with realistic strategies, are set and reviewed annually, using the Mission Action Plan template, building on the strengths of the Parish community;
  - (b) to work within the rules of governance as set down by the Parish Administration Act
  - (c) to ensure that good communication is maintained between all members of the Parish community;
  - (d) to provide all things necessary for the celebration of divine service and the administration of the sacraments;
  - (e) to have charge of the funds of the Parish, subject to the terms of any trusts, and to ensure that there is sufficient income for the purposes of the Parish;
  - (f) to ensure that the Parish adopts the best possible policy and practice in relation to the environment and sustainability;
  - (g) to provide a suitable residence for the Incumbent or other housing arrangements as approved by the Diocesan Executive;
  - (h) to ensure that adequate insurance against death, sickness and injury of all stipendiary clergy licenced to the Parish is provided;
  - (i) to ensure that all buildings and Parish-owned contents are adequately insured;

- (j) to appoint, control and dismiss where necessary all persons employed by the Parish and to provide for the remuneration of all such persons;
- (k) to ensure that accurate financial records are maintained and that an audited statement of accounts and balance sheet is presented to the Annual Parish Meeting and forwarded to the Registry as and when required by the Council of the Diocese and requested by the Registrar;
- (l) to ensure that a financial report is presented by the Treasurer to each meeting of the Parish Council;
- (m) to support the work of Diocesan initiatives and involvement in welfare and social justice, particularly through Diocesan agencies: New Horizons Welfare Services, Bencourt Care and Anglicare Victoria;
- (n) to maintain effective networks of information and shared purpose between the Parish and the Deanery.

## Parish Council Meetings

### Parish Council meetings

It is expected that Parish Councils will meet at least six times each year.

### Meeting Agenda

The Agenda for a Parish Council meeting should focus on significant issues of mission and ministry, leaving minutiae to meetings of Churchwardens or sub-committees.

A typical Agenda for a Parish Council meeting will look like this:

- Opening (welcome, prayers, confirmation of Minutes, overview of the meeting Agenda)
- Report from the Incumbent (preferably written, with suggestions for discussion)
- Report from the Churchwardens and Treasurer (noting any matters needing Parish Council decision)
- Corporate reflection on an issue relating to mission, as part of the Parish Council's regular ongoing review of the Parish's Mission Action Plan.
- Consideration of significant events and issues in Parish life, including reports from sub-committees and parish groups (youth, education, MU, ecumenical etc.)

### Absences from Parish Council meetings

A member of Parish Council may request up to three months' leave of absence in any year.

- If a Parish Councillor misses more than four meetings, even with an apology, the absence may be reported to the Bishop.
- If a Parish Councillor misses more than three meetings, without an apology for their absence, that person will cease to be a member of Parish Council and be so notified by the Churchwardens.

### Diocesan intervention

Where a Parish Council is having difficulty in effectively conducting its business, a Diocesan Archdeacon will be requested by the Bishop to report on the Parish Council and what appropriate action may be required.

Where a Parish Council is unable to make an appropriate decision about any matter that may impact on mission and ministry, the Bishop may request the matter to be referred to the Diocesan Executive Committee.

The calling-in of any matter by the Bishop will only take place after two meetings have been held between Diocesan representatives and the Parish Clergy and Churchwardens to seek to resolve the matter.

### Professional Standards

All members of Parish Councils are expected to abide by the Professional Standards code adopted by the Diocese.

### Confidentiality

All Churchwardens and Parish Councillors should regard many of the matters they deal with as confidential until it has been clearly decided by the Parish Council and/or the Diocese when material can be made public.

## **Management of Parish Property**

It is the responsibility of each Parish to care for its buildings.

In an age of compliance and expectations by users for first class facilities, many parishes face major challenges.

An annual audit of all Parish property is to be carried out by the Churchwardens, and presented to the Annual Parish Meeting. To assist with this responsibility, the Template in Appendix 2 has been developed. A priority listing of required work should also be maintained.

The Diocesan Registry is available to assist with property matters. Parishes are asked to consult with its staff as early as possible about any major property proposal.

### **Please remember:**

1. Any property expenditure over \$5000 requires the approval of the Diocesan Executive Committee, which meets normally on the first Monday of the month.
2. All contracts with regard to property, including leases of parish property, must be signed by the Diocesan Trustees. Parishes and Churchwardens do not have legal standing, and all parish property is held in trust by the Diocesan Trusts Corporation.
3. The Diocese pays insurance on all Parish property each February; each Parish/congregation is then billed for their insurance. Churchwardens should review annually the cover on all Parish property.
4. In accordance with The Parish Administration Act 2010 (amended 2016), a safe repository for keys with a key register is to be maintained by the Churchwardens. It should also include a spare set of keys to the Rectory. However, permission to enter the Rectory should at all times take place only with the consent of the occupant.



## Code of Practice for Parish Councillors

### 1. Parish Councillors must understand their role:

- As set out in the Parish Administration Act (Amended 2016)
- You are, in your behavior and speech, to set a standard that is exemplary

### 2. Parish Councillors should be familiar with the following documents (they are all in this pack)

- The Parish Administration Act 2010 (Amended 2016)
- The Parish Administration Policy Handbook
- Code of Practice for Congregations: The Joys and Responsibilities of being a Christian
- Being Together: A General Synod statement on congregational values
- Faithfulness in Service: A Code of Practice for church workers and leaders
- A Parish Council covenant
- Lay Authorisations policy

### 3. Parish Councillors in the Diocese of Bendigo are required to:

- Attend a Safe Church Awareness Workshop
- Obtain a National Police Check if necessary
- Obtain a Working with Children Check if in contact with children in the parish

### 4. The General Synod statement 'Being Together' is a good starting point for all Parish Councillors in establishing a Code of Practice for their role in the parish.

#### 1. Being a Community

- We will **seek the common good** of the church, not just our own interests.
- We will **encourage each other to participate** in the life of the church.
- We will be **aware of how our behaviour affects others**.

The role of a Parish Councillor is to help build and encourage the common good of the church community. This means acting in accordance with the Biblical principles of honesty, fairness and accountability.

#### 2. Relating to each other

- We will **treat each other with respect and dignity** irrespective of ability, gender, sexuality, race, age, or contribution of the church.
- We will **act with integrity and honesty** in our interactions with each other.

While Parish Council members will obviously have friends in the congregation(s), you are urged to treat all parishioners the same as much as possible.

#### 3. Communicating with each other

- We will **communicate respectfully** with others, and not in a way that threatens, belittles or humiliates.
- We will **respect confidences**, and refrain from speculation and gossip.

### **Practically, what does this mean?**

- Be careful with your use of language
- Parish Councillors should refrain from any physical contact with parishioners, except for shaking of hands
- Do not visit parishioners in their own home. Always take another warden or Parish Councillor with you. Preferably one of the opposite sex to yourself.
- Make sure that diocesan protocols in relation to the handling of church funds are observed and maintained
- Be very cognizant of boundaries; you are not expected to do everything or solve every problem in the parish. Consult, seek advice, call the Diocese!

## A quick guide to relevant material in the Parish Administration Act (PAA)

1. The Parish Council is to be chaired by the Incumbent or by a members of the Parish Council appointed by the Incumbent (PAA 2:5)
2. The parish should maintain a Pastoral and Electoral Roll
  - The Pastoral Roll shall include all persons in the parish or ministry district associated with the parish
  - The Electoral Roll shall be maintained for the purposes of being eligible to vote at the AGM (PAA 3:1-8)
3. Parishioners who reach the age of 80 are ineligible to be Churchwardens or Parish Councillors except where dispensation is sought from the Diocesan Executive or a simple majority vote at Parish Council meeting declares they can hold office (PAA3:8)
4. Churchwardens and Parish Council members can hold office for two consecutive terms of three years and then must have a break of one term of three years (PAA3:8, 5:2)
5. A parish may seek a variation to the above on application to the Diocesan Executive (PAA 2:4)
6. Parishioners standing for office as a Churchwarden or Parish Council member should be members of the Anglican Church of Australia.

This means:

- baptised,
- confirmed or
- received

into the Anglican Church of Australia

7. Parish Council members are required to sign the agreement contained in this pack prior to attending their first meeting