

A very brief guide to a well-run Chaplaincy Council

The work of chaplaincy councils is crucial to the vitality of our chaplaincy life and mission.

Huge thanks are due to those who give their time and expertise voluntarily to enable our chaplaincies to run well. We hope this document is useful in promoting best practice.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHAPLAINCY COUNCIL

Chaplaincy councils are constituted in accordance with Section 30 of the Diocesan Constitution. This sets out the functions of the council as follows:

1. Co-operation, with the chaplain, in promoting in the chaplaincy the whole mission of the Church.
2. The consideration and discussion of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the Church on any question.
3. Making known and putting into effect any provision made by the diocesan synod, the archdeaconry synod, or the deanery synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the council on any particular matter.
4. Administering the financial affairs of the chaplaincy including the collection and administration of all money raised for purposes of the chaplaincy and the keeping of accounts in relation to such affairs and money.
5. The care, maintenance, preservation and insurance of the fabric and of the goods and ornaments of the church unless this duty has been otherwise devolved.
6. Giving advice to the diocesan synod, the archdeaconry synod or the deanery synod on any matter referred to the council.
7. Raising such matters as the council consider appropriate with the diocesan synod, the archdeaconry synod, or the deanery synod.

It is good from time to time for every chaplaincy council to remind itself of these wide, mission-orientated aims. An induction session as part of the first council meeting after the chaplaincy annual meeting is strongly recommended.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHAPLAIN, THE COUNCIL AND THE BISHOP

As a fundamental point of Anglican polity, note that the chaplain holds a licence from the bishop, to whom the chaplain is accountable. The chaplaincy council has responsibility for raising, overseeing and spending chaplaincy funds and mostly that includes paying the chaplain. Depending on the national context, a chaplain may technically be self-employed, an office holder or an employee, but his or her relationship with the bishop is foundational. Churchwardens are lay leaders elected to work closely with the chaplain and to promote the peace and unity of the chaplaincy. Churchwardens are also officers of the bishop, and will sometimes need to consult with the bishop or the archdeacon - who represents the bishop. Churchwardens have particular responsibilities during a vacancy.

RUNNING WELL

Most of the time most chaplaincy councils run smoothly and well as chaplain and council cooperate together in advancing the mission of the church. Our chaplaincies are governed under the regulations of the Church Representation Rules and the Diocesan Constitution. So here are 10 characteristics of a well-run council:

1. There is a prayerful atmosphere.
2. Agendas are carefully prepared and sent out well in advance.
3. The business is conducted in a way that demonstrates mutual care between lay and clergy members and between the council and the broader community.
4. Kindness and respect are two key watchwords guiding the conduct of meetings.
5. Everyone has the opportunity to listen and to speak, and expertise is respected.
6. The council understands that the Church Representation Rules and constitution are there to help not to be evaded.
7. The 'rules' are not used to force a point of view.
8. The council understands that if there is a dispute about the rules it is probably about something else.
9. There is good understanding between the council and any standing committee, no one dominates, and all voices are heard.
10. Particular care is taken to ensure proper sensitivity to engage full participation from people of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

OUR VALUES

The Church is a community founded on the twin dominical commandments: 'Love the Lord your God and love your neighbour as yourself.' The New Testament is completely realistic about community life, but nonetheless sets out high spiritual principles and values to inspire and guide our life together, notably The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12), the

interdependence and contribution of everyone in the body (1 Corinthians 12) and the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Some key Christian values for chaplaincy councils include:

- Be respectful
- Be kind
- Be honest
- Take responsibility
- Disagree well

When a new council forms, consider how you are going to hold each other accountable for maintaining these values.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Sometimes in any council there will be conflict. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing and can be a healthy sign that people feel strongly about things that matter. But sometimes conflict becomes wearying and divisive and then it needs to be addressed.

- If a disagreement at a meeting gets out of hand, then those involved will do well to resolve matters face-to-face or by phone as soon as possible afterwards (Matthew 18:15). Email is not a good way to resolve conflict.
- Sometimes there could be a council member whose behaviour is excessively dominating or even intimidating. A wise chaplain (or churchwarden) will arrange to meet this person and try to help them understand how they are perceived.
- If the problem is caused by the way the chaplain is chairing the meeting, then churchwardens should mention this as a part of their regular meeting with and praying with the chaplain.

It is much better if disagreements and disputes are positively addressed and dealt with quickly rather than being allowed to fester. Longstanding conflict is much harder to resolve. If conflict becomes more serious, then either the chaplain or the churchwardens should involve the area dean or archdeacon. They are there to help:

- The archdeacon can meet and discuss matters with those in dispute.
- Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to invoke the early, informal stages of the diocesan anti-bullying policy.
- Either informal or formal mediation can be attempted if the parties want this and are committed to resolving the issue.

There are only very limited circumstances in which duly elected council members and churchwardens can be removed from office, so the importance of cooperation and good working relationships cannot be overstated. Everyone has the obligation to work together for the good of the chaplaincy and for the glory of God 'making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3).

FURTHER RESOURCES

1. 'PCC Tonight' by James Lawrence (<https://cpas.org.uk>) - A resource to help clergy lead church councils effectively.
 2. 'The Difference Course' (<https://difference.rln.global>) – a resource to help diverse faith communities deal with differences.
 3. [Church of England Social Media Policy](#)
 4. [Diocese in Europe Chaplaincy User Guides](#)
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