****

Productive meetings enable Pastoral Councils to be effective.

Careful planning before, during and after the meeting is required to ensure that time is well used and that members participate fully.

****

**Roles and responsibilities**

**President**

The parish priest is the official representative of the bishop and is ultimately responsible for all decisions made regarding the parish. This role includes:

* Meeting with chairperson and secretary to set the agenda for the meetings
* Give direction when necessary
* Ratify the decisions of the PPC
* Being accountable to the local bishop
* Ensure that on-going formation and training is made available for members

## Chairperson

The chairperson is primarily responsible for setting the agenda with the parish priest and secretary and facilitation of the meetings in order to ensure that the tasks of the council are fulfilled. These tasks include:

* Setting the agenda
* Facilitating each meeting – keeping the group focused
* Encourage the participation of all members during the meeting
* Facilitate decision making
* Resolve conflict as appropriate
* Ensuring that sufficient time is given to prayer and reflection
* Monitor the time
* Make sure that all agenda items are addressed

## Secretary

The secretary is responsible for keeping a record of the progress of the PPC and for circulating relevant material to the council members. The tasks of secretary include:

* Keeping a record of decisions taken
* Distribute the agenda and minutes of last meeting to members in advance of the meeting
* Receiving notification of absences
* Preparing agenda with priest and chairperson
* Keep a file of records of the PPC minutes and decisions

**Members**

All members, not just office holders have a responsibility to ensure that the council makes a significant contribution in the parish. The efficiency of the PPC will be undermined if members do not fully participate in the life and action of the council. Members have a responsibility to:

* Read materials circulated
* Submit agenda items on an agreed date before meeting
* Prepare agenda items, have points ready especially if responsible for a particular item
* Listen to the needs of parishioners
* Participate in discussion but do not force personal opinions
* Actively listen to the views of others in a non-judgemental manner
* Carry out actions agreed at meeting
* Notify secretary in advance if unable to attend a meeting

**Before the meeting**

***Pre-Planning***

The chairperson, parish priest and secretary meet to prepare for the meeting; they clarify the purpose of the meeting, prepare the agenda, prioritise items and allocate a time to the items. **The secretary** notifies all members of the group of the upcoming meeting and circulates the agenda in advance.

***Who decides what is on the Agenda?***

The chairperson is primarily responsible for setting the agenda with the parish priest and the secretary. Agree how members can put forward items to be included on the agenda

An agenda is simply a list of things you want to discuss at the meeting. It is useful because:

* It helps you plan the meeting
* It helps you to get through the business of the meeting efficiently
* It helps people at the meeting follow what is going on
* It gives people the opportunity to think about and prepare for the meeting in advance

***Items to consider in drawing up an Agenda***

Prioritise items so that those needing attention can be dealt with first in case the meeting runs out of time.

Make each important matter a separate item.

Look through the minutes of the last meeting – are there items to be reported back on, or items that need to be discussed again.

Limit the number of items on the agenda and avoid causing frustration by a long agenda with work left undone or skimmed over quickly.

Not all items need to be introduced by the chair – members may be asked in advance to prepare an input

***Welcoming environment***

Ensure that the venue is comfortable and organise seating in a way that is conducive to the active participation of all members. Check that the heating is adequate and that there are facilities for refreshments after the meeting.

***Possible Headings to be included in an Agenda***

1. Prayer

Time is allocated for prayer and reflection at the meeting. The work of the pastoral council is carried out in a spirit of prayer, trusting that God’s spirit will direct and empower the process.

2. Minutes and matters arising

The purpose of this is to agree the minutes of the last meeting are accurate and reflect what happened. It also ensures that nothing is forgotten or left unfinished.

3. Updates

This allows for feedback and discussion on actions and various initiatives undertaken by the pastoral council.

4. Pastoral Issues

Issues raised by parishioners, ministry groups, committees that need to be considered or dealt with.

5. Next Steps

After discussion, clarify with regard to decisions taken who is to do what, and when.
Future needs for the parish may be identified from the meeting.
Items may be identified for the next agenda.
Confirm the date of the next meeting.
Decide who will lead the prayer for the next meeting.

6. AOB

This should be kept to a minimum.

 7. Date and venue of next meeting

**During the Meeting**

***Prayer***

Allocate time for prayer and develop prayer as part of the life of the group and as its source of inspiration. Members can share the responsibility for preparing and leading the prayer.

***Agenda***

***Timeframe***

Begin and end each meeting according to the time schedule agreed by the group.

Try to make sure the important discussions get the time they need and that minor issues do not expand to take over the whole meeting.

While allocating a timeframe for items there is always a need to be flexible if required

***Social Dimension***

People need to get to know each other and build up good relationships if they are to work well and happily as a group. The chat and the cup of tea after the meeting provide a non-threatening and enjoyable way of building social interaction.

**After the meeting**

***Succinct Minutes***

The minutes are a record of the issues addressed and the agreed outcomes. They are a record of the proposed actions and the person(s) responsible for carrying them out. Minutes should be circulated shortly after the meeting to allow members act on agreed matters.

***Follow up on agreed actions***

The overall effectiveness of a pastoral council depends on the participation of its members. Agreed actions need to be carried out and reported on at the next meeting.

**Review of Parish Pastoral Council Meetings**

*Please tick appropriate box*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Preparation before the meeting** |  |  |  |
|  | **Never** | **Occasionally** | **Regularly** |
| Parish Priest, Chairperson and Secretary meet to prepare the agenda |  |  |  |
| Members of PPC contribute items for the agenda |  |  |  |
| Agenda is circulated in advance |  |  |  |
| Venue is prepared in advance |  |  |  |
| Members review materials circulated in advance of meeting |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Process during the meeting** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Time is allocated for prayer during the meeting |  |  |  |
| Chairperson facilitates the group in working through the agenda |  |  |  |
| All members have an opportunity to contribute to the meeting |  |  |  |
| Meeting begins and ends on time |  |  |  |
| Priorities for the next meeting are identified |  |  |  |
| Set date for the next meeting |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Actions after the meeting** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Minutes of the meeting are circulated. Contents include decisions taken, actions to be carried out, by whom and when, preparations required for the next meeting |  |  |  |
| Agreed actions are carried out |  |  |  |
| Communicate with the wider community i.e. newsletter etc. |  |  |  |
| Links are maintained with the Area Pastoral council and the diocesan Pastoral Council |  |  |  |

**www.dioceseofkerry.ie**