

Joint Church Council – A simple summary

This is intended to supplement the larger report that goes into much more detail.

What is a PCC?

A PCC is the Parochial Church Council for a parish in the Church of England. The mission of the PCC is 'Promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical' (the 1956 Parochial Church Powers Measure).

Legally the PCC is responsible for the finances of the parish, care for the buildings. All PCCs are charities (although not all have to register with the Charity Commission) which means every PCC member is a trustee of the charity.

We currently have 2 PCCs – one for the parish of Saxmundham and one for the parish of Kelsale cum Carlton.

What is a JCC?

A JCC is a Joint Church Council. At the annual meeting of the parish the 2 parishes (or more in other places) can make a scheme to join the PCCs together to form a single Joint Church Council. The two PCCs would delegate authority and decision making to the single JCC.

There are different models for a JCC. After lengthy discussion and research the Consultation Group proposes that we explore a full integration of the 2 PCCs, including governance and finances, into one single JCC.

Why would we want to?

Firstly, it makes governance easier. Here in the Benefice of Saxmundham with Kelsale cum Carlton we already work together on lots of different things. Joining the PCCs together makes decision making and organising simpler and quicker. It is a sign of our unity.

It also reduces the amount of meetings that we need to have – at the moment every other month the separate PCCs meet and have almost identical agendas. The PCCs discuss the same things but often can't make a complete decision on something until the other PCC has met.

Why wouldn't we want to?

It's complicated to set up (especially if we join finances together) and may take some time to get used to.

A parish might lose independence. This is a possibility; however we believe in unity – which doesn't necessarily mean uniformity. We want each parish and expression of worship to have the confidence to be what God is calling it to be and do what God is calling it to do.

Other benefits and potential drawbacks are detailed in the JCC report too with further comment.

Is this a done deal?

Absolutely not! We want to make sure that everyone has had time to think and pray about this and to ask all the questions that might come up. The Consultation Group have brought forward a proposal but the final decision rests with each parish at the APCM.

What about churchwardens? How might they work?

Our churchwardens already work really closely together. Under a JCC they would remain legally responsible for the parish they represent but we would hope they would share expertise and good practise across the benefice.

We are also proposing of reducing the number of churchwardens we have to four: two from Saxmundham and two from Kelsale cum Carlton. We would like to make use of the role of deputy churchwardens too.

What about finances?

The Consultation Group have explored finances in a lot of detail. The proposal includes sharing finances together in one account. This would make paying for Benefice wide initiatives much easier (like the Parish Share, any mission or discipleship we want to run, and maybe a Benefice Administrator).

Restricted Funds (like the various bell funds) remain for their stated purpose as we cannot change that easily.

Even if we don't move to a JCC we would like to move to a financial model where in September to December we plan and budget what we think we might spend for the following year. This type of budgeting gives us greater flexibility and permission to spend what people generously give.

What about big building projects and money?

We are fortunate to have three buildings to meet in (St Johns in Saxmundham, St Mary and St Peters in Kelsale, and St Peters in Carlton). We're less fortunate that these are all listed buildings with the problems that come with historic buildings. These can take a fair bit of money to take care of properly.

If there were specific building projects that need a lot of fundraising (the Kelsale Toilet for example) it is envisaged that specific fundraising will be sought for those.

What about some of the legal stuff like the Electoral Roll and Representation?

Although integrating the PCCs into a JCC involves delegating *some* of the legal responsibilities to the JCC there are some things that remain as they are now. There would still need to be a separate electoral roll for each parish (although someone can appear on both lists).

The two separate PCCs would still legally exist, but the 'stuff they do' would largely be done by the JCC.

Won't this make JCC meetings hours and hours long? That sounds terrible!

It does indeed sound terrible. Dave doesn't think meetings should go beyond 9pm (he's largely spent by then). Part of the solution is timed agendas (that we already use) and the setting up of subgroups to explore and discuss an issue/area then submitting a written report (it can be a simple summary) with a proposal for action. These groups could be project specific or ongoing.

We hope this helps give a simple summary of what is being proposed about a JCC.

If you have any questions please do speak with Dave, Nic, or any of the Consultation Group.