

A REPORT
INTO THE FEASIBILITY AND ADVISABILITY OF CREATING
A JOINT CHURCH COUNCIL
IN THE SAXMUNDHAM BENEFICE

PRODUCED BY THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP COMPOSED OF:

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Executive Summary

The two parishes and four congregations of the Saxmundham Benefice work together well. The palpable sense of unity within and between the congregations that has developed significantly, especially over the last two years since the onset of the pandemic, has enabled a more effective church in pastoral and missional terms. With changes in the Church Representation legislation having come into effect in 2020, we now have the opportunity to cement the bonds that unite us as one Christian community by considering the possibility of a Joint Church Council (“JCC”).

Our Mission as a church in the Benefice is to Love God, to Love one another and to Love our Community. At one level, the formation of a JCC might seem irrelevant to this mission. However, there are reasons to suppose that is not so: our unity – one of our values - as expressed in the JCC structure, should enhance our mutual understanding and thus love for each other. Moreover, in a society in which churches are seen by wider society as being divided by denominational and geographical boundaries, closer integration would counter that impression and strengthen our ability to work as one in our communities. Finally, to the extent that reduced clergy and officer time were spent on administrative and organisational matters, more bandwidth is available for mission and worship. In an ideal church, there would be no need for administration, the closer we can move to that ideal, the more we can focus on loving God.

The process of implementing a JCC would actually be relatively simple. What is more complex is ensuring that all stakeholders feel confident that creating a JCC is a beneficial and worthwhile thing to do.

The Consultative Group, after very lengthy and detailed analysis and prayerful consideration, unanimously recommends that the Benefice adopts the JCC model in its most comprehensive form.

Now that the Consultative Group has published its findings, there needs to be sufficient time in which Benefice Leaders, the two PCCs and ultimately the whole church body across the Benefice need to become familiar with and, if appropriate, endorse the group’s proposals.

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Summary and Conclusions

The Consultative Group: membership and process

The JCC Consultative Group (“the Group”) was formed as a result of PCC meetings in Saxmundham and Kelsale-cum-Carlton during September 2021. Its membership was largely determined by the Benefice Leaders group at its meeting in October and the composition is as follows:

- Sue Cowling
- Rev. Olwen Field
- Doug Fletcher
- Nigel Pite
- Fran Raven
- Rev. Nic Stuchfield (Chair and Secretary)
- Viv Wills-Crisp

The membership of the group represents both parishes and includes members of both PCCs as well as non-members of either.

The group has met a total of 11 times during the last three months for a total of 17 hours of meetings. It has been a pleasure to be part of such a mutually respectful and thoughtful team, which has consistently been able to wrestle with a variety of topics and reach a consensus as it has meticulously worked through the many issues involved. The conclusions that we have reached are accordingly unanimous.

The Options

Throughout its deliberations, the Consultative Group has considered three Options:

- A – The full integration of the PCCs to form a unitary JCC to which all aspects of governance would be delegated;
- B – Partial delegation of functions to a JCC, with the remaining responsibilities being discharged by the PCCs (with a particular likelihood of financial matters being retained by the PCCs) leading to both PCCs and JCC operating side-by-side; and
- C – The maintenance of the Status Quo: two PCCs and no JCC.

These designations (Option A, B or C) are used throughout the Report.

The Context of the Saxmundham Benefice

There is a chapter (Context) covering this topic, the summary finding of which is that through the combined circumstances of pandemic and vacancy, the parishes have worked and worshipped increasingly closely together. Since Dave's arrival, that coming together has further developed. Moreover, while some members of the group were sceptical about the benefits of a JCC at the outset, the unity uncovered by the group's discussion has enabled us to come together and form unanimous conclusions.

The case for and against a JCC

a. The Opportunity for closer integration

Assuming little or no change to the things that we already do together, what scope for integration is there for those things that we do separately?

Depending on the Joint Church Council structure agreed upon, the benefice could integrate further in the following ways:

Governance: Technically, the existing parochial governance structures would remain in place (without which the scheme would be to create a United Parish rather than a JCC).

So, each Parish would still hold an Annual Parish Meeting to elect the Churchwardens for the Parish. Moreover, each Parish would also still hold an Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) to conduct its formal legal business.

However, the two APCMs could be held side-by-side at the same time and would, in the recommended option, approve the financial accounts of the Benefice and elect a Joint Church Council for the Benefice.

PCCs would be in abeyance as the Benefice structures would take on their work under Option A.

Electoral Roll: Although legally an Electoral Roll would still be required for each Parish, a common Roll would be centrally maintained showing for each member for which parishes s/he was on the Electoral Roll.

Finance: A single Benefice accounting structure would be introduced under Option A so that a single Treasurer would maintain the accounts and banking arrangements for the Benefice, maintaining restricted or designated accounts for each parish or congregation where required. Both parishes separately adopt this structure for each of their congregations already but this would remove a good deal of duplication (in bank reconciliation, reporting etc.).

Buildings: While all the current buildings would obviously need to be maintained, there might be some efficiency in having a common Benefice team to organise this and arrange procurement for any works required.

All these activities are secondary to the principal Gospel focus of the church but are necessary to enable it to take place. Other things currently done separately would be likely to remain distinct.

The key success factor for any scheme of integration would be whether, at the same time, it made more efficient those things which are necessarily duplicated at the moment whilst leaving discretion for local colour and choice within each congregation. With two parishes, each with two congregations, this is already a tension that exists and has had to be overcome in our PCCs. This task of integration is not therefore something which is qualitatively new but rather something we already do but in future potentially on a larger scale.

b. The Advantages of closer integration

It might be felt in the light of the statements in the Context chapter about what we already do together, the advantages of further integration might be minor. However, there are a number that are worth pointing out:

Increased unity and co-operation: Anything that increases our commonality of purpose in proclaiming the Gospel and demonstrates unity and brotherly love would be advantageous (and of course in keeping with Christ's commands). Our existing experience suggests that greater unity and co-operation would follow, though there is the theoretical possibility that the endeavour might have the opposite effect. The key success factors are the safeguards to allow congregational discretion where beneficial and wisdom to know where that is the case.

Reduced bureaucracy and meeting time: If you are a member of one PCC, this probably would not make much difference. However, if like Dave and Nic, you are required to take part in both

PCCs there is a material saving of time and effort. That is especially so in the (rare but not unique) circumstances where a common approach is brought to each PCC but one decides to vote one way and the other a different way!

Elections and officers: Both parishes at times have struggled to identify two Churchwardens. Although, in a JCC structure, there is no more flexibility to modify the number of Churchwardens across the Benefice, there is scope for different Churchwardens to specialise (for example, for one to be the Buildings expert across the Benefice). We are also advocating the appointment of Deputy Wardens to support the elected Churchwardens. There would only need to be one Secretary and one Treasurer (rather than two). A Joint Church Council would have a single election (under Option A). The legal responsibilities of all the above officers would be unchanged although the scope of their brief would obviously be the Benefice rather than a parish.

Economies of purchasing: The procurement of, for example, utilities, insurance, building supplies and ecclesiastical supplies could be centralised and has some (probably modest) scope for cost saving. A greater potential for time-saving exists!

Pastoral structure within the Deanery and Diocese: Although it does not appear in the Diocesan literature, there is another positive advantage to the JCC model in our circumstances. Notwithstanding that there are no guarantees, in a Pastoral Re-organisation within the Deanery (the like of which is almost inevitable during the 2020s), breaking up the Benefice and combining each parish into a different Benefice would be less attractive to the Diocese were we to be part of a JCC structure. A JCC would therefore support our petition not to be severed in any future Pastoral Re-organisation. Were we asked to incorporate additional parishes into our Benefice, the existence of a JCC structure would make such accretions less burdensome administratively.

c. Potential Disadvantages of a JCC structure

Diocesan materials suggest that there might be five kinds of disadvantages:

- a) *Parishes might lose independence:* As mentioned above, safeguards are required to ensure that would not happen but in extremis it would be possible for a parish to revoke the JCC structure and revert to its former state.

- b) *Loss of restricted parish funds on transfer*: The Diocesan materials point out that this is not allowed to happen. JCCs must honour existing fund usage constraints, just as PCCs currently do.
- c) *A JCC cannot in and of itself help a parish find a Churchwarden*: No, but it can make the role more attractive to a potential candidate by enabling the role to be shared across the Benefice according to people's gifts and talents.
- d) *JCC's may have to register with the Charity Commission*: This would not be a change as the St John's PCC already has to and is.
- e) *Banks and insurance companies may take time to get used to the new model*: That is true but assuming that we created a new Benefice bank account with a specialist charitable bank provider, we might find our banking arrangements easier to manage after a JCC implementation.

The Consultative Group's proposals

The group proposes an implementation of a JCC at the earliest practical opportunity. Such a JCC would take the fullest form possible, Option A: that is, the JCC would take on all the powers and unrestricted assets of the two PCCs (including financial considerations) and the PCCs would go into abeyance indefinitely. Either parish could, at any subsequent time, revoke the JCC arrangement unilaterally if it felt that its interests were not being represented at and by the JCC.

The group actively considered a half-way house model (Option B) by which the PCCs would retain financial control (perhaps for an interim period) but ultimately (and unanimously) concluded that a full implementation at the outset would be more unifying as well as easier to explain and manage. At some level, the logic here was that if we are not united enough to pool finances then we are not united!

Full details of the composition of the JCC are set out in the "Issues – detail" chapter but can be summarised as follows:

- Licensed Clergy, Lay Workers and Treasurer;
- 4 Churchwardens, each representing a congregation but working together;
- 2 of the Deanery Synod Representatives (one from each parish); and
- 9 Elected Lay members (elected by the Benefice as a whole).

This composition provides a balance between those representing the individual parishes or congregations and those whose responsibility is to the whole Benefice.

Other recommendations not specifically associated with a JCC

As we considered the very wide range of issues, we identified a number of other suggested changes which, though not explicitly linked to the idea of a JCC, should be considered in any case. As such, any of the following ideas might or might not be adopted without impacting the core JCC decision. These additional proposals include:

- Churchwardens: elect two only per Parish, ideally one to represent each congregation within the Parish (1c);
- Churchwardens: propose a motion in the Kelsale-cum-Carlton annual meetings to institute the 6-year limit rule in keeping with C of E policy and Saxmundham (1c);
- Elected PCC members: propose a motion in both parishes' annual meetings to institute a 3-year limit rule in keeping with C of E policy (1c);
- Finances: review and restructure the accounting structure of the Benefice with a view to maximising flexibility by replacing, where possible, restricted giving with designated or general (5b, 6a);
- Finances: implement an annual budgeting process in the 4th Quarter of each year to facilitate spending on strategic mission priorities (5d);
- Finances: clarify and if appropriate standardise the discretions that the Incumbent, Wardens, Standing Committee etc. have to authorise expenditure (5d);
- Finances: create a designated account for an Incumbent's Discretionary Welfare fund to facilitate meeting the real needs of people in our community (5d);
- Communication: sundry improvements including internally publicising who is on each PCC (including photographs on display), PCC minutes to be displayed in each church building, thorough review of web-site content (7a);
- Communication: candidates for election to produce a profile (200-300 words) prior to the annual meetings (7c);
- Representation: clarify the responsibility that elected members have to represent the whole church not just their own congregational element of it (8d);
- Policies: review all policies and where appropriate standardise across the Benefice (15a).

The numbers in brackets indicate the section in the Issues detail chapter in which further details may be found.

Supporting information

In order to provide full information, we have created, reviewed and now publish a wide range of supporting documents (incorporated as chapters within this report), which the interested observer might benefit from reading. These include:

- A chapter seeking to set out the background and context for our Benefice (Context);
- A tabular presentation of the issues that we have considered (Issues Summary);
- A lengthy detailed findings chapter that spells out the issues, how the group addressed them, giving reasons and conclusions (Issues – detail);
- A chapter that sets out the potential Implementation timescales and associated issues (Implementation)
- A chapter that identifies the criteria the group feels should be used to assess the success of the JCC (Success Criteria);
- The original two-page document outlining the idea (Diocesan authorship) (Diocesan JCC outline); and
- The legal document that sets out the structure and responsibilities of the JCC (a Diocesan template, customised for our circumstances) (Scheme document).

Implementation timescale and issues

The process of implementing a JCC is actually relatively simple. What is more complex is ensuring that all stakeholders feel confident that creating a JCC is a beneficial and worthwhile thing to do. Now that the Consultative Group has published its findings, there needs to be a reasonable period of time in which Benefice Leaders, the two PCCs and ultimately the whole church body across the Benefice need to become familiar with and, if appropriate, comfortable with the group's proposals. The detailed steps in this process are set out in the Implementation chapter.

The key decision point is a Church Meeting (in the form of an APCM or, if at a different time in the year an Extraordinary PCM) in each parish. Either parish can vote down the principal proposal and if so, no further consideration is required: it does not proceed. Moreover, to succeed the motion to implement the JCC needs to be passed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in each parish meeting.

If that test is passed in both parishes, the legal document is submitted to the Bishop's Council for its consideration and approval, whereupon it would come into immediate effect.

Assuming the process of widening understanding concludes successfully, then resolutions will be put to each APCM accordingly to their previously planned timetable this May. Associated changes may be made at the same time to the election of Churchwardens (at the Parish Meeting) and the PCCs (at the APCM) to enable both the ancillary recommendations to be implemented as well as smoothing the way for the launch of the JCC should it pass all hurdles.

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Context

The two parishes and four congregations of the Saxmundham Benefice work together well. The palpable sense of unity within and between the congregations that has developed significantly, especially over the last two years since the onset of the pandemic, has enabled a more effective church in pastoral and missional terms. With changes in the Church Representation legislation having come into effect in 2020, we now have the opportunity to cement the bonds that unite us as one Christian community by considering the possibility of a Joint Church Council (“JCC”).

This paper describes the current context of what we do together as a Benefice and the things that we do separately as congregations.

Context

As already observed, the Benefice already works very closely together. We are facilitated in this by a number of factors, not least that the Benefice has existed in its current form for over 15 years and only consists of two ecclesiastical parishes. A larger or more recent amalgamation into a Benefice would be much more complex. But first, we begin by looking at the areas in which there is already integration:

Our Incumbent: Dave was recruited through a very co-operative discernment process and is now, of course, the Priest-in-Charge of the whole Benefice.

Our Clergy: Beyond Dave, the rest of our growing clergy team all work and worship interchangeably across the Benefice.

Our Benefice leaders: Since the beginning of the vacancy, our Benefice leadership team has been structured to reflect the whole Benefice and works well together providing day-to-day decision-making that both serves and unites the individual congregations.

Our Elders: Our Elders are all licensed across the Benefice rather than in particular congregations.

Our Congregations: Since the disruption of the pandemic, it has been a noticeable feature of our congregations that they are, by and large, much more willing to worship in whichever congregation happens to be meeting rather than to attend “home matches” only!

Our Service Schedule, Teaching programmes and Rota: These items are all now largely organised on a Benefice-wide basis. Whilst the Churchmanship of our different congregations varies considerably, even this is organised on a Benefice-wide basis: we are able to meet the diverse needs and wishes of our actual and potential congregations by offering a variety of worship styles and this is co-ordinated and united in its fundamentally evangelical theological foundation.

Pastoral Care: Our Pastoral care and its coordination has been carried out on a Benefice-wide basis since the beginning of the pandemic.

Mission and nurture: Our Baptism and Wedding policies, our outreach events and our nurture courses (like Alpha and Christianity Explored) are all conducted uniformly across the Benefice. When we welcome new people into our congregations, we welcome them into the whole body of the Church, not a congregational section of it.

Home Groups: All our Home Groups operate on a basis that transcends our original parochial structure and many of the individual groups enjoy members of multiple congregations in their midst.

Our other Ministries: None of our other Ministries (e.g. At the Crossroads, the Debt Centre, Busy Bees, Open the Book, Messy Church) limits participation to members of one of our congregations. Members of different congregations work harmoniously with each other in all cases.

Website: We now, for the first time, have a Benefice website.

Safeguarding: Safeguarding is carried out on a Benefice-wide basis.

Data Protection: Our church database of members is held on a Benefice-wide basis.

Benefice Events: Increasingly, events in our Benefice are open to all across the congregations.

Our Vision: Our developing vision and values have been re-formulated and agreed on a Benefice-wide basis.

It would be an exaggeration to say that all our members regard themselves, first and foremost, as members of the Benefice. Many more closely associate with one of the congregations, reflecting different preferences in terms of worship style. But more than ever previously the levels of mutual respect and understanding between these diverse congregations and their members supports unity of purpose in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

If we do an enormous amount together, there are things that we still do separately.

Parochial Governance: Each parish holds its own Annual Church Meetings, elects its own Churchwardens, Deanery Synod representatives and PCC. All of these are and will remain legal requirements. The PCC for each parish covers two congregations with representation in each case from both. Currently, each PCC is the formal policy and decision-making body for much of what we do and spends considerable time validating the (often identical) proposals put to it by the Benefice leaders (e.g. the easing of lockdown restrictions, Baptism policy, Vision and values etc.).

Electoral Roll: Each parish maintains its own Electoral Roll of members.

Finance: Each parish appoints its own Treasurer (acting or permanent) and maintains its accounts and banking arrangements. This includes the payment of its share of the Benefice Parish (i.e. diocesan) Share as well as the payment of other costs like insurance and utilities.

Buildings: Each parish maintains its own church and other buildings.

Churchmanship: Each parish determines aspects of its own churchmanship (e.g. robing policy), recognising that the congregations within each parish may have different preferences in these matters.

Parish events: Each parish holds its own parish events (e.g. the annual Kelsale Flower Festival) for community and or fundraising objectives.

Taken as a whole, while there is plenty of scope for the parishes and their congregations to do things separately and distinctively from the other congregations, the Benefice works very well in a cohesive way. Relative to most Benefices (i.e. multi-parish structures), Saxmundham is much more integrated and united than the vast majority. If this happy state of affairs is so, what benefit is there in seeking to change?

Issues Summary

This document is intended as a summary of the longer Issues and Conclusions chapter.

In the table, the headings (and the entries below) have the following meanings:

Significance: How critical is this issue in the context of the decision on whether or not to have one JCC or remain with two PCCs? For example, Safeguarding is extremely important but in the context of the Consultation it is not significant because it is currently done Benefice-wide and would continue to be. Items marked Low are therefore regarded as being ones that will not be determining factors in any decision made but nevertheless require thought and clarity.

Today: Some of the answers in this column are a simplification of something more complex. For example, Disagreement and how to achieve compromise is important across the Benefice but is actually negotiated at a Parochial level today because of the structure under which we work.

Future, if JCC: Issues 2 and 5 depend crucially on whether Option A (Full JCC) or Option B (Partial JCC) is chosen.

Issue	Detail	Significance	Today	Future, if JCC	Comments, if JCC
1. Composition of JCC	Number and representation of members, term etc.	Very High	Parochial	Benefice	Ensure all congregations represented
2. Existence/ abeyance of PCCs	Do they continue to meet, how often?	Procedural	n/a	Depends	Depends on Option A or B
3. Standing & Sub-committees	How to achieve subsidiarity	High	Parochial	Parochial	Primarily dealing with fabric-related matters?
4. Implementation	Up to and after the APCM decisions	Procedural	n/a	Benefice	See separate Implementation Paper
5. Finances	One set of accounts or two, Treasurer(s)	Very High	Parochial	Depends	Depends on Option A or B
6. Giving & Fundraising	Collectivised or building/project specific	Low	Parochial	Mixed	Fund Benefice & specific Parish projects
7. Communication	During the process and ongoing after any changes made	High	Mixed	Benefice	Scope for improvement in any event
8. Maintaining ownership and representation	Representativeness, fairness & legitimacy	Medium	Parochial	Mixed	Important today & in the future
9. Disagreement, achieving compromise		High	Parochial	Benefice	Important today & in the future
10. Economic benefits	Quantitative, Qualitative, Achievability	Low	Parochial	Benefice	Financial benefits limited. Time savings higher.

11. Matters relating to specific roles:	Churchwardens, Treasurer, Deanery Synod Reps	Medium	Parochial	Mixed	Scope for role efficiency or specialisation
12. Charitable Status		Low	St John's	Benefice	Use the St John's charity for the whole Benefice
13. Safeguarding		Low	Benefice	Benefice	As now
14. Fabric-related issues		Low	Parochial	Parochial	Much work done outside the PCCs and in future by sub-committees
15. Policies		Low	Benefice	Benefice	As now

Issues - Detail

The previous chapter listed the Issues in outline form. In this chapter, the issues are examined in detail and for each we considered five questions:

- a) What happens in this regard today?
- b) In the context of the Consultation and the decision that we might reach regarding a JCC, how significant is this issue and how great would be the change required? (So Safeguarding is an extremely important issue but in the context of the Consultation it is not very significant because it is currently done Benefice-wide and would continue to be. Items marked Low in the Issues Summary Table are therefore regarded as being ones that will not be determining factors in any decision made but nevertheless require thought and clarity.)
- c) What might happen under each scenario? (Option A: a full JCC, Option B: a partial JCC leaving some issue areas under PCC auspices, Option C: retain the status quo, two independent PCCs)
- d) What if any safeguards might be required (transitional or otherwise) to protect a subset of the Benefice from being disadvantaged by a majority in either Option A or B?
- e) Does the issue and our conclusions on it point to a particular option as being the preferred one?

1. Composition of a JCC

- a) The PCCs are composed as follows:
 - Saxmundham:
 - Licensed Clergy (throughout meant to include the Priest-in-Charge) (2)
 - Licensed Lay Workers (1 active)
 - Churchwardens (2)
 - Deanery Synod Reps (3)
 - Elected members (12 maximum) – derived from an Electoral Roll of 106
 - Treasurer and Secretary as applicable. (Up to 22 people in total)
 - Kelsale-cum-Carlton
 - Licensed Clergy (as above) (2)
 - Licensed Lay Workers (0)
 - Churchwardens (4)
 - Deanery Synod Reps (quota of 2, actually 1)
 - Elected members (6 maximum) – derived from an Electoral Roll of 43
 - Treasurer and Secretary as applicable. (Up to 16 people in total)

In reality, the PCCs are smaller than this, mainly because the number of elected members is lower than the maximum allowed.

- b) The JCC Consultative Group felt that this issue was extremely important and of all the issues discussed, this one had the most time devoted to it by a considerable margin. The change from two PCCs to a single JCC (in Option A) would be the most important constitutional change in the Benefice since its formation and how the JCC was composed would be key in terms of gaining the legitimacy needed to be effective as a governance structure.

At the core of this issue is the nature of representation and the two conflicting forces associated with it. On the one hand, church members (especially those who generally only worship in one of our congregations) need to feel confident that their views and those of the congregation to which they belong will be fully and fairly represented in the JCC. We called this the need for specific representation.

On the other hand, to be successful in its mission to grow in unity (but not uniformity) within the Benefice, the JCC needs to be able to represent the Benefice as a whole and its members would ideally be able to place their own congregational loyalties in the framework of the unity of the body of Christ across the Benefice. We called this holistic representation.

This is therefore a delicate process of balancing and a dynamic one over time, as, we hope, the Benefice progressively comes to align on those matters where commonality is sensible while at the same time recognizing the need for diversity where that is beneficial (and knowing when each tendency applies!).

- c) The Consultative Group spent a considerable amount of time discussing a proposal for composition. While there was unanimity on the recommendation below for Option A, it was fully recognized that subsequent discussions with PCCs and the wider church membership might necessitate changes and so the Consultative Group holds this proposal suitably lightly.
- Option A (or, though we are not recommending it, Option B):
 - Incumbent (1)
 - Licensed Clergy (currently 1)
 - Licensed Lay Workers (effectively currently 1, excludes 8 Lay Elders)
 - Churchwardens (4) See *Note 1* below
 - Deanery Synod Reps (2 in total, 1 from each Parish) See *Note 2* below
 - Elected members (9 in total) See *Note 3* below
 - Treasurer and Secretary as applicable. (Up to 20 people in total, 19 voting)

Note 1: We currently have 6 Churchwardens, two from each Church (building). There will definitely be a lot of change in our Wardens over the next two years. Recruiting new wardens might be a struggle. One option would be to move to a position where we had 4 wardens, one for each congregation (Kelsale, Carlton, St John's, The 9:30 service). Although Wardens would still have to be elected (each year) by the Parish meeting, candidature and primary responsibility would be identified by the congregation. Churchwardens would therefore provide "specific" representation.

Today, the Churchwardens co-operate well together. In the future, it would be desirable for the Wardens (with the support of their Deputies, see below) to enhance their collaboration across the Benefice, according to their gifts and talents. Whereas today, it is a reasonable (though not perfect) characterization to say that each Warden only attends to the needs of their particular church or congregation, in future, the desire would be that Wardens would cover for each other and fill in where necessary, bringing their particular talents to bear across the Benefice.

We additionally concluded that it would be good to have a Deputy Warden to support each Warden but without the right or obligation to be an *ex officio* member of the JCC. Not only would this lighten the load but it would also provide a degree of succession planning. There is no reason why the Deputy Wardens could not stand for election to the JCC as lay members under the provisions below.

The Diocesan-provided Legal Template suggests one Churchwarden from each parish. This stipulation would clearly be important in a large multi-parish Benefice composed of, say, 10 parishes. However, the notes provided by the Diocese to the template state that the suggested membership may be altered in any respect and in our two parish scenario having a total of four Churchwardens on the JCC would seem to be a reasonable position to adopt.

The policy of the Church of England is that Wardens serve for 6 years and then take an enforced break of 2 years. Whilst it is not strictly necessary as part of any JCC implementation to adopt this policy in Kelsale (it was passed in Saxmundham last year), it is proposed that this policy be implemented across the Benefice. Sensitivity will be required in handling this point.

Note 2: These roles are elected by the APCM for a three-year term and by law are *ex officio* members of the PCC (but are not included in the Diocesan Template for JCC membership). The maximum number of Reps per parish is determined by the size of the Parish's electoral roll. We do not propose to change the number of Deanery Synod representatives elected by each parish (nor could we change the formula).

However, the inclusion of five such Reps in the JCC would either make it very large or would significantly reduce the capacity for elected lay members. So, in order to limit the size of the JCC and to ensure balance between the Parishes, it is proposed that the highest

polling representative from each Parish would be a full member of the JCC throughout their term of office. There is no reason why the other Reps could not stand for election to the JCC as lay members under the provisions below. We certainly felt that it was important that the parishes' representation at Deanery Synod had familiarity with the deliberations of the JCC.

Like the Wardens, these individuals would be representing the parish and its congregations "specifically" rather than the Benefice as a whole. Despite the fact that the Template does not allow for the inclusion of Deanery Synod Representatives in the JCC, the inclusion of two such reps in the JCC seems reasonable.

Note 3: Before including elected members of the JCC, there would already be a total of 10 JCC members (assuming that the Treasurer was *ex officio* and the Secretary was not a voting member of the JCC). Thought therefore needs to be given to the maximum manageable size of the JCC. The Consultative Group, when polled individually came up with a range of views on maximum size, from 15 to 18. The proposal here would be to elect 9 JCC members from across the Benefice, taking the total membership to 19 but recognizing that there would be few if any occasions on which everyone would be present.

The Diocesan Template suggests one elected person per Parish but again it may be that the authors have in mind large multi-parish Benefices. They also suggest that there is an effective quota for each parish. However, the idea that the elected members are elected by the whole Benefice to represent the whole Benefice ("holistic" representation) seems a reasonable counterweight to the ("specific") parochial representation of the Churchwardens and Deanery Synod Representatives.

The policy of the Church of England is that PCC (or JCC) members serve for 3 years and then take an enforced break of 1 year and it is proposed that this policy be voted on at the next APCM in each parish to come into effect one year later. So once the initial implementation phase were complete, with a third of the lay members being elected each year, there would be three places available for election each year (plus any casual vacancies arising). This is very likely to lead to contested elections.

The Group considered the transition from 2 PCCs to one JCC in terms of elected lay members. We concluded that, in the short-term, in order to avoid demotivating existing elected PCC members, it would be sensible to allow anyone who wanted to transition to the JCC to do so, reducing the total number as quickly as sensitively and practically possible (at the next APCM cycle).

The Consultative Group discussed the implementation of a minimum vote threshold for successful candidates to be elected to JCC membership: however, after researching the issue it is not permissible within the Church Representation Rules of the Church of England.

- Option C: As now but with the implementation of the six-year term rule (for Churchwardens) and the three-year term rule (for lay elected members) in both Parishes.
- d) The Consultative Group considered whether safeguards were required and what they might be. The conclusion reached was that the mix of specific and holistic representation was itself an important safeguard and that any additional safeguards that might be implemented would run counter to the ideal scenario of increased unity and mutuality. Specifically, we concluded that quotas on JCC membership by congregation would be very difficult to structure in a way that was fair and transparent.
 - e) The composition of any JCC does not in itself point in favour of Option A. Nevertheless, the composition, being an important element in the legitimacy of any JCC, would be a critical success factor for Option A. The idea of running two tiers of elections for both JCC and PCC (with overlapping memberships) did not seem attractive to the Consultative Group and argues against Option B accordingly.

2. Existence and/or abeyance of PCCs

- a) Not applicable to today's circumstances.
- b) This issue is purely procedural and would be a corollary of choosing Option A.
- c) In Option A, the current PCCs would go into abeyance, only to be revived in the eventuality that one or both parishes decided to dissolve the JCC. In Options B & C, the current PCC's would need to continue, though it is expected that under Option B the need to meet would be less frequent as the purview of the PCCs would be materially narrower than at present (perhaps only being financial matters). Option C would be a continuation of the status quo.
- d) No safeguards would be required as the scheme would allow for the dissolution of the JCC by a majority vote in either parish's APCM. (It is not expected that this would be a standing resolution at APCM: it would be tabled only when and where there was enough apparent dissatisfaction to warrant it.)
- e) This criterion does not point one way or the other as it is purely procedural.

3. Standing Committees and Sub-Committees

- a) Today, each Parish/PCC has a Standing Committee composed of the Priest-in-Charge, the Churchwardens, the Treasurer (if not one of the above) and, in the case of Saxmundham, a co-optee. The Standing Committees do not routinely meet, as urgent business arising between PCC meetings is rare and is more often dealt with by email approvals of the full PCC.
- b) Insofar as it relates to the Standing Committee(s), this issue is not very significant. However, under Option A, the need, hopefully occasional, to have part of the decision-making structure that was parochial in nature might be very important in both reality and perception.
- c) In Option A (and probably also in Option B as well), it is proposed that the Benefice Leaders group (howsoever defined but currently including the Licensed Clergy, Licensed Lay worker and Churchwardens, and perhaps in future including the Treasurer) would be reconstituted as the Standing Committee of the Benefice/JCC. It has been suggested that it would be advisable to co-opt one lay elected JCC member to the Standing Committee to ensure that it does not seek to usurp the proper discretion of the JCC.

In Option A, it is also proposed that there should be a sub-committee of the JCC for each parish. This would not meet routinely but only where there were some extraordinary parochial matter that could not be resolved by the JCC. Membership of each parish sub-committee would be composed of: the Incumbent, Licensed Clergy, Licensed Lay workers, the Churchwardens representing that parish, all Deanery Synod members representing that parish and any elected lay JCC members who were members of the electoral roll of that parish.

Under Option C, the status quo could continue unchanged.

- d) The existence of sub-committees for each parish might well be an important safeguard both to ensure that there was a forum for parish-specific matters as well in terms of the perception of representation for each parish.
- e) This criterion does not point strongly in any direction except that the proposed approach under Option A would result in some streamlining of the Governance structure of the Benefice.

4. Implementation

- a) Not applicable to today's circumstances and only relates to Options A and B.
- b) It would be significant if there were widespread and vocal disagreement about the way forward and/or the implementation were very costly or complex but in those scenarios we would be very unlikely to proceed in any event. Otherwise, issues of implementation are primarily procedural in nature and subordinate in importance to the underlying advantages and disadvantages.
- c) In both Options A and B, the implementation legalities are set out in the various Diocesan documents. In Option A, the current PCCs would go into abeyance, only to be revived in the eventuality that one or both parishes decided to dissolve the JCC. Once a proposal were put to both APCMs (or if appropriate Extraordinary PCMs) for approval, and assuming they both voted in favour by the required majority, the Scheme Document on which they had voted would be submitted to the Bishop's Council for approval. On approval by it, the JCC would come into immediate effect and work would then commence to notify the Charity Commission, our Banks and other parties requiring to be notified (e.g. CAP). Fuller details on Implementation are set out in the relevant chapter below.

If the approval was sought during APCMs, the PCC elections would be conducted in the normal way with elected lay PCC members being grandfathered into the JCC until the 2023 APCM; no further APCMs would be required in 2022. The Implementation paper sets out a possible timeline.

In Option B the only obvious difference would be that potentially fewer notifications would be required (e.g. Bank accounts would not need to be changed if finances were being reserved to the PCCs).

In both cases a large part of the implementation success or failure falls to communication. This is especially necessary before any E or APCMs (why is this being proposed?) but also afterwards. See section 7 below.

Obviously, there would be no implementation requirement under Option C.

- d) No safeguards would be necessary as the formation of a JCC requires a super-majority vote at each APCM.
- e) As this issue relates to implementation, it does not in and of itself point in favour of any option, unless the effort arising from the implementation is unduly contentious or time-consuming in comparison to the benefits of the Option chosen.

5. Finances

- a) Each Parish maintains its own finances today. One parish appears more able to generate giving than the other (this is not a judgmental statement merely an observation of reality).
- b) This criterion is potentially a very important one, especially in the context of Option A (assuming that Finances would be reserved to the PCCs under Option B).

On the one hand, a pooling of Finances would result in reduced Treasurer effort in total across the Benefice as well as Leadership time. The Consultative Group felt that the formation of a JCC would be a good time to restructure the Finances of the Benefice, encouraging more giving towards the General Fund and reducing the amount of congregation-specific funding. A reformed financial structure would have more focus on budgets agreed before each financial year for key activities (e.g. Youth and Children's Work).

On the other hand, such a restructuring might lead to concerns about ongoing independence. Although the Consultative Group felt that the greatest issue here was the potential for the Connections leadership team to be concerned at an apparent loss of independence, discussions within the Connections leadership suggest this not to be the case. At the core of this whole topic is whether the congregations within the Benefice feel sufficiently alike and in good fellowship to want to demonstrate greater unity. Ultimately, that is the acid test for the whole JCC concept and one could argue that Finances are no different in that regard and do not therefore suggest much benefit in Option B as a halfway house (either temporarily or permanently). The above notwithstanding, this feels like a very significant issue.

- c) In Option A, the Finances of the two parishes would be combined (one bank account) and there would be a single JCC General Fund to which most giving would be paid and from which major expenditure would be made. Giving mandates would need to be amended accordingly. Discussions with current and potential treasurers suggest that it might be simpler to open a new JCC bank account and request all giving members of the Benefice to switch their standing orders or equivalent to this new account.

There would still be the need for Restricted and Designated funds for certain purposes (e.g. The Debt Centre). It would also be envisaged that each church building would continue to retain designated funds for buildings-related expenditure into which dedicated fundraising could be channeled. Some designated funds (e.g. Youth and Children's work) would become Benefice-wide funds where they are currently parochial, and would receive budgeted income from the General Fund for carrying out specific activities, enabling the JCC to determine where to commit expenditure on the most effective basis.

In Options B (assuming Financial matters were reserved) and C, there would be no material change to the current arrangements.

- d) In terms of Safeguards, the foremost safeguard would be extremely clear and detailed communication as to what is being proposed so that all stakeholders would feel they understood and could hopefully endorse the changes being proposed.

A thorough budgeting process during the fourth Quarter of each year would enable the JCC (or PCCs – as this would be recommended in any scenario) to decide on strategic missional priorities in advance of the beginning of each financial year. This would also enable the church across the Benefice to communicate to all members what the required giving was to sustain the strategy of the Benefice. This process would protect funds for key missional activities (including, for example, the maintenance and, where appropriate, development of Church buildings).

It is also recommended that an Incumbent's Discretionary Welfare fund be created and budgeted to enable ad hoc financial assistance to be provided in a clear and legal way, without the need for PCC meetings and other time-consuming decision-making structures.

- e) There was unanimous agreement that this criterion pointed to Option A as being the preferred option (“if we cannot agree on Finances, what sort of unity do we have?”). However, there was anxiety that agreeing to the changes in this respect would take considerable time and individual dialogue to effect. The Group felt that this issue was of such importance that not only did it want to discard Option B but it also so wanted to be sure that there was a unified approach on Finances that garnered support from all stakeholders that the transition to Option A should depend on it. However, even under Option C it was strongly felt that restructuring of both PCCs accounts would be necessary.

6. Giving and Fundraising

- a) Today, each PCC raises funds for general purposes and specific needs and projects. At various times up to the present, both parishes have raised specific funds for projects (e.g. St John's re-ordering, Kelsale Toilet twinning and the Kelsale toilets and kitchen reordering etc.). In Kelsale-cum-Carlton general fundraising covers the agreed share of the Parish Share payable to the Diocese but not a great deal more. By contrast in Saxmundham, considerable excess funding is raised to support a range of missional activities, some of which are used to fund activity across the Benefice. Whilst there would be an advantage in converting a proportion of giving currently for specific purposes (including to Restricted Funds) to general funding (if this could be done without loss of income), there is nothing in the JCC that necessitates this.

- b) This issue was not felt to be a significant one in the context of the JCC Consultation as there would be little difference between the three options, so long as the current structure of giving was retained (that is, those who wish to give to specific accounts should be able to continue to do so). However, we felt that clear communication of this issue to the whole congregation was very important.
- c) Broadly speaking, in all Options, fundraising would continue as it does today: sometimes for general funds and on other occasions for specific purposes.
- d) It is felt that no new safeguards are required. Fund accounts can either be Restricted (use strictly limited to the purpose of the fund), Designated (use for the purpose of the fund a priority) and General (no specific limitations on how the money can be used). This already represents a significant safeguard.

It was agreed that discretions (budgeted and non-budgeted amounts that different people are allowed to spend without seeking higher approval) should be clarified and made consistent across the Benefice.

It would be vital to retain, at least for the foreseeable future the current accounting structures of the PCCs even on a combined basis under option A so as to enable current regular donors to continue to give as they currently do.

In terms of encouraging giving, it was felt that clarity about the expected purposes to which funds raised would be put is very important and clear pre-set annual budgets are the most straightforward and effective way of achieving this.

- e) The combination of a parish with seemingly lower giving capacity with one with a greater level would seem to be beneficial in terms of ensuring that the Benefice can manage its finances more sustainably, so long as people in both parishes desire unity. As the Benefice mission, vision and values stress both unity and generosity, this criterion would seem to favour Option A over either of the other two options.

7. Communication

- a) Communication today is mixed. On the one hand a lot of communication is already carried out (well) on a Benefice-wide basis (e.g. Benefice News, the Web-site, A Church Near You, Sax news articles etc.), although some is parish-specific (e.g. the Kelsale Newsletter). There is a lot of good communication but it was also felt that there were some big gaps, especially (and importantly in this context) the fact that it was felt that few people knew who was on the PCC's, there are no photographs of PCC representatives or other Benefice leaders, there are no PCC Minutes on display or very much in the way of information for visitors and newcomers. The web-site is still a work in progress.

- b) This issue was felt to be important both during the consultation and implementation period and once any change to the Governance structure had been implemented. However, crucially such change was needed regardless of whether a JCC was implemented, and even in Option C, this increased communication should be done on a Benefice-wide basis.
- c) As suggested above, the same improvements would be beneficial under all three Options: clarity as to who is on the JCC/PCC, candidate profiles for elections, photos of JCC/PCC members on display, more welcome information in Church for visitors, more information on the Benefice web-site.
- d) In terms of a potential JCC implementation, it was felt that at least one whole-church meeting would be helpful in order to explain what the idea was and why it would be beneficial to do it. Good communication is itself a safeguard.
- e) Given the above, it was not felt that the subject of communication favoured any particular option.

8. How to maintain a sense of ownership and representation

- a) Here again, this is an area where there is scope for improvement today. As indicated above, there is not felt to be a widespread awareness of who currently represents the congregations at the PCCs.
- b) This issue was also felt to be important but regardless of whether a JCC were implemented or not. The overall sense was that it was important to improve the sense of ownership and representation in any future scenario and so the issue was felt to be commensurately less important in terms of choosing an Option for the future.
- c) A number of the suggestions in the item above (7) are relevant for this item as well, regardless of the Option chosen.
- d) A number of important safeguards were discussed including:
 - Ensuring that JCC/PCC members recognise their responsibility to represent the whole church not just their congregation or friends;
 - A public reminder of this to candidates at each APCM;
 - The importance of members of the congregation knowing to whom to give feedback and ideas (in addition to clergy) as well as their sense of being listened to when they do;
 - All Church Members having respect for each other regardless of their congregational affiliations or theological position.

It was felt that the tone came from the top and, in this regard, we were blessed.

- e) Given that there is scope for improvement at the moment, it was felt that it would be easier to achieve this with a JCC and this pointed to either Option A (ideally) or Option B as being the preferred options.

9. Disagreement, achieving compromise

- a) It was felt that, on the whole, the church within the Benefice does well on this criterion today. There is not much disagreement either within parishes or between them. Indeed, this is a key factor in enabling the subject of JCC being discussed at all. To the extent that different views are held, they are generally handled openly and directly and all members of both PCCs should (and probably do) feel able to voice their opinions and be heard.
- b) Although this is a positive at the moment, it was still felt to be very important in the context of the consultation. The ability to achieve compromise, even if it is an agreement to difference is critical to the church being able to represent the body of Christ.
- c) The attitudes and behaviours that are required are the same regardless of the Governance option chosen and are described in the next bullet.
- d) A number of decision-making characteristics would (continue to) be helpful in this regard:
- The ability for all people respectfully to express their views;
 - Preparedness for decisions to be deferred for further thought and prayer;
 - The option of inviting those particularly interested in an issue to meet together (as with Baptism policy, for example) to give fuller and more prayerful consideration to the issue;
 - The use of trial periods or pilot schemes to assess wider opinion (as with individual cups for Communion);
 - The ability where relevant and possible to agree to differ – to adopt different approaches in different congregations (as with robing, for example);
 - A practice of Benefice Leaders considering issues either before JCC/PCC discussion or, if no clear consensus emerges, afterwards to negotiate a compromise in a smaller group.

It was felt that the key point here is that unity is vital but it does not necessarily have to mean conformity and that the ability to reflect people's differences within the Benefice will often be a strength.

- e) It was felt that it would be easier to continue to achieve this with a JCC as it would provide a common forum not currently available and this pointed to Option A as being the preferred option.

10. Potential for cost savings and benefits

- a) The single largest expense item in the Benefice is the Parish (i.e. diocesan) Share. Aside from (quite regular) expenditures of a one-off nature relating to buildings, technology etc., other large items include utilities and insurance. Most other costs paid for by the General funds are very small. The Parish Share is currently allocated between Saxmundham and Kelsale-cum-Carlton according to a long-standing and simple formula. All other costs are decided and borne by each parish/PCC.
- b) The group felt that although this was quite a significant issue, the savings involved would be relatively small and some of the economies could be made co-operatively without a JCC in place.
- c) Under Option A, expenditure would be determined by the JCC as it would today by each PCC, but jointly. A single JCC bank account would enable utilities and insurance to be sourced jointly (but this is unlikely to be possible under Option B or currently).
- d) No specific safeguards would be required in this context.
- e) Although the potential for cost savings is limited and some of that could be realised through closer co-operation today, it was felt that this issue pointed in favour of Option A.

11. Matters relating to specific roles

- a) The roles that we considered here were the following: Churchwarden, Treasurer, PCC/JCC Secretary, Deanary Synod Reps. Each of these roles is elected or appointed by each parish at the current time, from amongst those on each Parish's electoral roll.
- b) Whilst it was felt that this issue was a delicate one and needed good communication to the PCCs and the church body, it did not seem to be a very significant decision-making factor in its own right.
- c) After carrying out detailed research on this area on a number of technical points, we propose a way forward, looking at Option A:
 - a. Churchwardens: Each parish would still continue to elect its Churchwardens as the electorate includes all those on the civic electoral roll. The normal number of churchwardens to be elected is two per parish. There is no legal reason why the same person could not be elected as Churchwarden in multiple parishes within the same Benefice (so long as s/he met the normal criteria).

The implementation of a JCC does not change the Church Representation Rules regarding the election of Churchwardens and two (no more or no less) are to be elected in each parish, however, with a JCC they could jointly and severally carry out the responsibilities placed upon them in the Benefice, specialising as would be most appropriate to their gifts and talents. It is proposed that all (four) Churchwardens be *ex officio* members of the JCC as they would be of their PCC today.

- b. Treasurers: In Option A, there would be one Treasurer for the Benefice. In Option B (assuming finances were reserved to the PCCs) there could be one or two Treasurers. A single Treasurer could be supported by a deputy/book-keeper. It is proposed that Treasurers be *ex officio* members of the JCC as they would tend to be of their PCC today.
 - c. Secretary: In Option A, there would be one Secretary for the JCC. In Option B, it would ideally be the case that one person would fill the Secretary role for all three bodies (JCC and 2 PCCs) so as to ensure that the meetings and their minutes seamlessly and accurately reflected the division of responsibilities within the Benefice.
 - d. Deanery Synod Representatives: The number of these to be elected in each parish is a function of the size of the electoral roll of the parish, with St John's being entitled to three and Kelsale two reps.
- d) As Churchwardens and Deanery Synod Reps would continue to be elected parochially, we felt that this aspect of the proposal far from needing a safeguard, constituted a natural safeguard to ensure that the interests of one or more congregations were not overlooked.
- e) We felt that the inherent scope for flexibility and efficient working that having Churchwardens in particular working co-operatively across the Benefice would be a pointer in favour of either Option A or B. However, we noted that the Wardens already collaborate so the effect would not be a strong one. As mentioned above, we felt that this issue would need to be clearly and sensitively communicated to all concerned.

12. Charitable Status

- a) The St John's PCC is already a registered charity with the Charity Commission on account of the size of its income and expenditure. Kelsale-cum-Carlton PCC does not need to register and never has done so.
- b) This issue does not seem to be a very significant one in the context of the consultation.

- c) Under Option A (and probably also under B), it would seem sensible to include the Kelsale PCC under the St John's Charitable registration. This would be likely to be a simple process, facilitated by the legal paperwork for setting up a JCC, as provided by the Diocese. Once the process was completed, it is not envisaged that there would be any more work in maintaining the wider charitable status than currently. However, the benefits of charitable registration would then be felt by Kelsale-cum-Carlton as well as St John's.
- d) It is not felt that any additional safeguards are necessary.
- e) This issue points to a JCC (either option) being preferable but not strongly.

13. Safeguarding

- a) This is already handled on an integrated Benefice-wide basis.
- b) Given the above, this is a non-issue for the purpose of JCC analysis.
- c) In all scenarios, it is expected that the current policy and process would continue to be followed.
- d) No additional safeguards are felt to be necessary.
- e) Under the circumstances, this issue does not point to any particular option being preferable.

14. Fabric-related issues

- a) Fabric-related issues are dealt with by each PCC by Church Building. So, for example, at the Kelsale PCC there might be discussion about fabric-related matters involving each of Kelsale and Carlton churches but these will be handled separately. Each of these churches has a specific fund designated to the fabric upkeep of the particular church and the funding for any maintenance, repair or development work is accounted for separately and raised by those responsible for that Church. Fabric-related matters fall within the legal responsibilities of the Wardens of the church concerned.
- b) This issue was not felt to be a significant one in the context of the JCC Consultation as there would be little difference between the three options.
- c) It is proposed that the same logic would be employed whichever of the options were chosen. Under option B (partial JCC), it would seem sensible for the PCCs to retain accountability for this issue. On occasions, under Option A, the parochial sub-committee

of the JCC for a parish (see item 3 above) might need to meet to discuss fabric-related issues.

- d) Assuming the current way of dealing with fabric-related issues continued, it is not felt necessary to create any additional safeguards, though care would be needed to ensure that discretionary fabric-related expenditure was fairly determined (i.e. all the improvements were not focussed on a single building).
- e) This issue does not point to any particular option being preferable.

15. Policies

- a) The Sax PCC has a set of policies in place but these are overdue for review and updating. The same is true for the Kelsale PCC, where five policies were adopted in 2013/14. In recent months, the PCCs have been separately discussing Mission, Vision and Values, which collectively over-arch the policies, as well as specific policies on Baptism and the Administration of Communion. Discussing policies which should ideally be identical across the Benefice in two distinct fora has been frustrating.
- b) This issue was not felt to be a significant one in the context of the JCC Consultation as despite the frustrations it was felt to be important for the policies to be the same across the Benefice (except where there was a specific reason to the contrary).
- c) In this area, under option B, it is recommended that policy formulation would be passed from the PCCs to the JCC, making options A & B identical. The outcome of all three options in terms of policies approved and implemented should be the same although under option C the process of doing this would be more cumbersome and time-consuming.
- d) It was not felt that any specific safeguards would be necessary.
- e) Although the importance of the issue is felt to be low, this issue points strongly towards a preference for either option A or B over option C (the status quo).

Implementation

The process of implementing a JCC is actually relatively simple. What is more complex is ensuring that all stakeholders feel confident that creating a JCC is a beneficial and worthwhile thing to do. Following the publication of this report, there needs to be sufficient time in which Benefice Leaders, the two PCCs and ultimately the whole church body across the Benefice need to become familiar with and, if appropriate, endorse the group's proposals.

The key decision point is a Church Meeting (in the form of an APCM or, if at a different time in the year an Extraordinary PCM) in each parish. Either parish can vote down the principal proposal and if so, no further consideration is required: it does not proceed. Moreover, to succeed the motion to implement the JCC needs to be passed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in each parish meeting.

The preliminary meetings (before the APCMs) are intended to test the proposals and to facilitate approval at the APCMs but it remains a real possibility that at any intermediate stage strong opposition would be expressed to the proposals which would result in them either being significantly modified or withdrawn completely.

Implementation timescale

The JCC Consultative Group concluded its lengthy and comprehensive deliberations on 1st March, 2022.

Benefice Leaders (Churchwardens, Tom Boswell and the Licensed Clergy) met as a group on 1st March, having received the two main papers one week previously and a bundle of other supporting papers earlier that day. At that discussion, there was widespread support for the proposals with a minority reserving judgment.

The next step of the process is to be a presentation to the joint PCCs, to take place on 15th March, 2022. This meeting is not a decision-making meeting but an opportunity for PCC members in both parishes (who will have received all the papers over a week in advance) to understand the proposals and the logic behind them more clearly.

The individual PCCs meet on the evenings of 22nd and 23rd March (Saxmundham and Kelsale-cum-Carlton, respectively) and at these meetings it is expected that each PCC will discuss and, if appropriate, endorse the proposals.

At or shortly after this point, assuming the PCCs endorse the proposals, the process of broadening knowledge and understanding of the initiative to the wider church will begin. In the first instance this will likely take the form of items in Benefice News and summary information being available on the SKC web-site. The use of Sunday morning sermon slots has also been suggested. The full documents will be available to any member of either Electoral Roll who wishes to have them. After Easter (and in all likelihood during the weeks commencing 25th April or 2nd May), there will be a Benefice-wide meeting for anyone who would like to find out more to come and learn and ask questions.

The APCMs are currently scheduled for May (Saxmundham, date to be determined; Kelsale-cum-Carlton on the 15th). It is planned to submit motions to each APCM to implement the JCC and if both APCMs approve the motion by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, then the legal document creating the JCC will be submitted to the Bishop's Council.

The next suitable meeting of the Bishop's Council is currently set for 17th July, 2022. If all the previous steps have been passed and the Bishop's Council approves the scheme then the JCC would come into effect on the following day.

Post-implementation activities

Assuming that the Bishop's Council formally approves a JCC proposal for the Saxmundham Benefice, then the JCC will have come into immediate effect on 18th July, 2022. The Consultative Group is recommending that for the first period of its life before the 2023 APCMs, the JCC will be composed of all members of both PCCs who wish to belong to it. There would therefore be no need for new elections or the identification of a subset of the PCCs to form the JCC.

The principal practical change that will need to be made will be to combine the finances and accounting of the Benefice (assuming that the Consultative Group's proposal of Option A is adopted). This will take some considerable time and both the existing Treasurers and the Treasurer-designate in Saxmundham are aware of the proposals, at least in outline.

There is no fixed timescale for the financial combination as the JCC can operate with oversight of both current sets of accounts but, closer to the 2022 APCMs it would be sensible to plan the likely implementation in more detail.

The Charity Commission will require notification of a change to the current Saxmundham PCC charity.

The implementation of the Consultative Group's other recommendations

The other recommendations for change that the JCC Consultative Group discussed during its deliberations (and which are included in outline in the Summary document) are entirely independent of the JCC proposal and broadly speaking independent of each other. They could be discussed and approved or rejected by the existing PCCs or held until the decision was made on whether to implement a JCC, whereupon they could be discussed and approved or rejected by it. Some of them require approval by the APCM in each parish.

Success criteria

As one of the initial steps of the JCC Consultation process, the working group discussed what the criteria for success might be: what would success look like?

The Consultative Group felt that success should be measured at two points:

- On publication of this document – in the Consultative Group’s view did the proposal and other recommendations meet the success criteria?
- One year after the APCM (or EPCM) votes – did the outcomes (regardless of whether option A, B or C were ultimately settled upon by the APCMs) meet the success criteria?

Criteria relating to Representation

- (Nearly) all people feel that their views are represented fairly in the Governance structure of the Benefice
- Church members feel listened to and valued
- Consultation and communication are better than currently
- Elections are contested
- Members of the Church and its officers feel more empowered to carry out the work of the Church and the Mission of God

Criteria relating to Unity and integration

- Congregational membership is not evident as a major factor of affiliation within the Governance structure
- There are no factions within the Governance structure
- There is a willingness for gracious compromise
- The overall sense of unity (shared values, togetherness and belonging) is enhanced

Criteria relating to mission and worship

- The current diversity of worship is retained and celebrated

- Our commitment to missional activity (“the five marks”: Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform injustice and Treasure creation) is clarified and enhanced
- Key ministers (lay and ordained) are encouraged and their work is supported by others within the Church

Criteria relating to efficiency

- Clergy and officers are subject to less stress than currently
- The finances of the Benefice are streamlined
- Cost-saving efficiencies are able to be realised

This list is not exhaustive and as we carry out formal reviews of the Consultation and the outcome chosen by the APCMs, these criteria might be modified or be added to.

Obviously, the overriding success criterion is that the Governance structure *ex post* should be in some sense better than *ex ante*. This could still be the case even if no change were made to the current structure (if, for example, communication and consultation led to a greater feeling of inclusion and representation).

Having now published its report, the Consultative Group concluded that the full and successful implementation of its proposal for Option A and its ancillary recommendations would indeed enhance Representation, Unity and integration, Mission and worship and Efficiency. For any of this to happen good communication will be essential.

Scheme Document

The Diocese has provided a legal template for the formation of a Joint Church Council, with explanatory notes and options for Parishes or Benefices to modify to customize it to their local circumstances. This section includes a modified version of the template to reflect the proposal that the Consultative Group is making. It is been arrived at after full discussions with the Diocesan Registrar and as a result is in agreed form. The final document when submitted will omit a number of the footnotes but will include information in the Schedules at the end.

**The Parishes of Saxmundham
and Kelsale-cum-Carlton
In the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

Scheme for a Joint Council

Made pursuant to Section C of Part 9 Church Representation Rules 2020

Annual parochial church meetings of the parishes of Saxmundham and Kelsale-cum-Carlton (“Parishes”) in the benefice of Saxmundham (“Benefice”) hereby make the following scheme:

1. New Joint Council

The Parishes establish a joint council (“Joint Council”).

2. Name of Joint Council

SKC Church

3. Membership of Joint Council

The Joint Council shall have the following membership:

1. the incumbent of the Benefice;
2. any ministers licensed to the Benefice, (“minister” having the meaning specified in Rule 83(1) of the CRR). Curates in training are excluded from this definition; they shall be expected to attend meetings of the Joint Council, but shall not be voting members;
3. the churchwardens (two) from each Parish, as elected by the annual parish meeting of each Parish¹;
4. one deanery synod representative from each Parish, being either the representative elected with the highest number of votes in an election or, in the event of an election not being required, the person agreed by the deanery synod representatives themselves or failing that nominated by the incumbent of the Benefice²;
5. nine other lay persons from the Benefice, being on the church electoral roll of one or both Parishes, and elected subject to the following considerations:
 - a) a common list of eligible candidates will be submitted to the annual parochial church meeting of each Parish with the elected candidates being, in the first year, the nine of them with the highest combined number of votes, taking into account the voting in both Parishes;

¹ The Annual Parish meeting being the meeting of all residents of the Parish and those on the Church Electoral Roll, called to elect the Churchwardens.

² Each Parish will continue to elect its quota of Deanery Synod Representatives but only one of them will be an ex officio member of the JCC.

- b) in the first year, three candidates will be elected for a three-year term, three for a two-year term and the final three for one year only, on a basis to be determined and published by the PCCs in advance of the annual parochial church meetings; and
 - c) in all subsequent years, the number of lay members elected will be three plus any casual vacancies to be filled at that time;
6. such lay persons holding the Bishop's licence as lay ministers in the Benefice as the Joint Council may decide³;
 7. the Joint Council may also co-opt up to two additional members (who may be clergy or lay) if it considers that their particular skills or experience would be of benefit to it.

4. Officers of the Council

1. The chair of the Joint Council shall be the incumbent of the Benefice or during a vacancy the priest in charge.
2. The secretary of the Joint Council shall be any person so appointed by the Council and shall record the minutes of meetings, hold all documentation related to Joint Council business, record any resolutions and monitor actions taken on behalf of the Joint Council, and transact any correspondence relating to the affairs of the Joint Council.
3. The Joint Council shall appoint one of its members to be its treasurer.
4. The Joint Council shall appoint an auditor or independent examiner (as required by law), who shall not be a member of the Joint Council and who shall have access to all financial statements of the Joint Council.
5. The Joint Council may appoint an administrator upon such terms as it thinks fit.
6. The posts of secretary, treasurer, auditor or independent examiner, and administrator may be remunerated at the Joint Council's discretion, subject always to the provisions of the Charities Act 2011 and the Church Representation Rules 2020 (or any statutory revision of them).
7. The Joint Council may appoint further remunerated or unremunerated officers as it thinks fit.

5. Meetings of the Joint Council

1. The Joint Council shall hold not less than four meetings each year as equally spaced through the year as reasonably possible. The first of such meetings taking place on or after the annual parochial church meetings⁴ each year shall be designated the annual meeting, at which the Joint Council Officers (other than the Chair) shall be appointed to serve until the end of the next annual meeting.

³ As there are eight Lay Elders within the Benefice, it is not considered realistic for all of them to be ex officio members of the JCC. Needless to say, they are eligible for election as lay members.

⁴ In the Parishes, as elsewhere, it is customary for the new Church Council to meet immediately following the APCM in order to appoint officers and to set the dates of meeting for the forthcoming year.

2. The Chair shall at each meeting call for declarations of any potential conflict of interest from members. The Chair shall have the power to bar individual members from votes of the Joint Council where he considers that a conflict of interest may arise. Rule 5.8 below continues to apply.
3. The treasurer's reports detailing the financial transactions of the Joint Council, including payment of parish share to the Diocesan Board of Finance and the finances of any Benefice-wide activity, shall be presented no less than annually and voted on by members of the Joint Council. Such reports shall be made available to the annual parochial church meeting of each Parish.
4. Dates for future meetings shall usually be set during meetings. A Joint Council meeting may be convened by the Chair or if requested, by at least a quarter of members at any time, in all cases giving at least ten days' notice to members (provided that such notice may be waived if all of the members consent).
5. An agenda and any other documentation to be discussed at a forthcoming meeting shall be delivered to members and to members of the PCCs of the Parishes not less than seven days prior to the date of the relevant meeting.
6. No business shall be transacted at a Joint Council meeting unless at least one quarter of members are present and the majority of the members present are lay members.
7. All business of the Joint Council shall be decided by simple majority of those present, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
8. The provisions of Section B of Part 9 of the CRR 2020 shall apply to the proceedings of the Joint Council as though it was a parochial church council, provided that if those provisions are inconsistent with the provisions of this Scheme then the provisions of this Scheme shall prevail.

6. Minutes of the Joint Council

1. A record shall be made and retained of those present and voting at any Joint Council meeting.
2. All business transacted, resolutions put to the Joint Council and future actions agreed shall be recorded.
3. The minutes of Joint Council meetings shall be circulated to members of the Joint Council and to members of the PCCs of the Parishes and to such other persons as the Joint Council may decide.

7. Functions and Powers of the Council

A. General

1. The functions and powers of the Joint Council are subject to the CRR and to any other rules and regulations of the Church of England in force at the time.

2. The Joint Council may agree on behalf of all the Parishes the allocated diocesan share requested of the Benefice.
3. The Joint Council may authorise, approve, order, manage and dissolve Benefice-wide activities, including those for mission, worship, outreach, fundraising in furtherance of the mission and ministry of the Church of England in the Benefice.
4. The Joint Council may establish a standing committee and subsidiary committees from time-to-time. The composition, financial affairs, minutes and any other proceedings and actions of such committees shall be under the direction of the Joint Council.
5. The Joint Council shall be consulted on any matter that affects all the Parishes.
6. The Joint Council may authorise the treasurer to manage such funds as it directs.

B. Specific

1. Subject to sub-clause 2, all the functions of each PCC are delegated to the Joint Council, including those specified in Section 2 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 (as amended and re-enacted from time to time), including:
 - co-operation with the Minister in promoting in the Parishes the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
 - caring for church buildings, their contents and churchyards;
 - caring for church records and registers;
 - safeguarding, health and safety, data protection;
 - finance.
2. The following functions are retained by the PCC's:
 - the functions of an interested party under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 Part 3;
 - the functions of a parochial church council under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.

8. Disputes

Any dispute on any matter relating to Joint Council business shall be raised with the Chair in the first instance. Thereafter it shall be raised as necessary with the archdeacon.

9. Variation and revocation

The Joint Council derives its powers under this Scheme, which may be varied or revoked subject to the provisions of the Church Representation Rules 2020.

10. Assets

1. The assets listed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 shall vest in the Joint Council on the date when this Scheme comes into effect and shall be held for the general purposes of the Joint Council.
2. The assets listed in Part 2 of Schedule 1 shall vest in the Joint Council on the date when this Scheme comes into effect and shall be held for the restricted purposes identified in Part 2 of Schedule 1.
3. Assets (other than cash gifts donated as part of the donor's regular church giving, which shall be held for the general purposes of the Joint Council) gifted by lifetime gift to a PCC shall be held by the Joint Council for the benefit of the Parish concerned as a restricted asset.
4. Assets (including cash) gifted by a will or other testamentary disposition to a PCC shall be held by the Joint Council for the benefit of the Parish concerned as a restricted asset.

11. Date of coming into force

1. This scheme was approved by the constituent Parishes in accordance with Model Rule M42 of the Church Representation Rules 2020 at a parochial church meeting of each Parish being either an annual or a special meeting called for this purpose on the dates specified in Schedule 2.
2. This scheme shall come into effect on the day after ratification of the scheme by the bishop's council of the diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Schedule 1

Part 1 – Assets vesting in the Joint Council for its General Purposes

Parish	Asset
St John the Baptist, Saxmundham	All assets other than those held for restricted purposes
The United Parish of Kelsale and Carlton	All assets other than those held for restricted purposes

Part 2 – Assets vesting in the Joint Council for Restricted Purposes

Parish	Asset	Restricted Purpose
Detail to follow		

Schedule 2

Dates when Scheme approved by Parishes

Parish	Date Approved	Numbers Voting		
		For	Against	Abstained
To be completed post APCM				

Approved by the Bishop's Council on
Scheme in force with effect from



Setting up a Joint Church Council (“JCC”)

What is new?

Joint councils have always been possible, but have never been allowed separate legal status and so have never had continuity or been able to own property, have a separate bank account, enter into contracts, take out insurance etc. JCCs formed after 1/1/2020 will have this legal status, just like PCCs. They no longer have to do things in the name of one of the PCCs, as was the common solution in the past, when, for example, a benefice wanted to run a joint project or a joint fund.

What is the process for setting one up?

Changes to the Church Representation Rules, which came into effect on 1/1/2020, enable ‘connected parishes’ to make schemes establishing a joint council: see **section C of Part 9** (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2019/1/schedule/1>). Parishes are ‘connected’ if they belong to the same benefice (including a benefice which is a team ministry), if they belong to benefices held by the same priest, or if they are in the area of the same group ministry.

The composition, rules, functions and responsibilities of the JCC are set out in the scheme and decided by the APCMs (or special PCMs) of each parish. They may choose to transfer either all the property, rights, liabilities and functions of the PCC (see Configuration A below), or only selected ones (Configuration B). The intention is that connected PCCs will work together in making recommendations to the annual or special PCMs and thus initiate and implement the process in co-operation with each other. A scheme is prepared, put to the PCMs, and if adopted by all of them, sent to Bishop’s Council for approval before taking effect.

Configuration A: All property/functions/rights of individual PCCs transferred to JCC. PCCs still exist, but effectively go into abeyance.

- A scheme establishes a JCC and transfers *all* the property, rights, liabilities and functions of the individual PCCs to it.
- APCMs continue to constitute PCCs as before; deanery synod reps are required from each parish as before; PCCs keep accounts as before BUT individual PCC meetings and business should be minimal e.g. all the PCCs in the scheme appoint a common secretary (the secretary of the JCC) and a common treasurer (the treasurer of the JCC); if separate PCC meetings are necessary, they can happen as sub-committee meetings of the JCC; PCC accounts will be held within the JCC account; PCC bank accounts, insurances, contracts etc. will all be transferred to the JCC; the scheme will provide for the JCC’s membership to have appropriate representation from each parish.

Configuration B: Selected property/functions/rights only are transferred to the JCC. PCCs retain others independent of the JCC.

- A scheme establishing a JCC transfers only *certain* property, rights, liabilities and functions – as specified in the scheme – of the individual PCCs to the JCC. It may be different for each parish.
- Individual PCCs continue to function alongside the JCC, with the JCC exercising only the functions that are transferred to it, all others remaining with the individual PCCs.



Advantages

1. Reduce costs – a JCC will be able to negotiate better deals for insurance, utilities, administration and other outgoings by acting on behalf of all the parishes together.
2. Reduce admin time – individual parishes do not each need to invest time and effort in something that will now be done centrally; meetings and paperwork can be reduced.
3. Sharing – stronger, well-staffed parishes can help weaker ones, since the JCC will relieve them of anxiety and responsibility, and make up for shortfalls in PCC membership. Financial costs common to all parishes are shared between them.
4. Flexibility – the JCC scheme can be drafted in different ways to accommodate different situations. Configuration A may appeal more where all parishes are similar in size and ready to move to full collaboration and cooperation as a benefice. Configuration B allows a situation where the smaller parishes in the benefice are pleased to be relieved of responsibility by the JCC, but a couple of strong parishes choose to retain some independence, whilst still playing their part in the JCC at benefice level.

Disadvantages

1. Parishes lose independence? - an annual or special PCM may always revoke its parish's part in a JCC scheme.
2. Fabric and other individual parish funds are lost on transfer to the JCC? – No. If they are already legally restricted to specified purposes, then the restriction will continue and must be honoured by the JCC.
3. A JCC does not solve the problems of parishes that cannot find churchwardens? True, but there is nothing to stop someone being churchwarden in more than one parish in the same benefice, provided they have made a habit of attending worship in that parish and thus qualified to go on its church electoral roll. By transferring responsibility to the JCC, the load on individual churchwardens should be much lighter.
4. JCCs may have to register with the Charity Commission, even if turnover is less than £100,000 pa (the current level at which a PCC must register).
5. Banks, insurance companies etc. may take a little time to get used to the new model.

Help

James Hall, the diocesan registrar (01473 406270 james-hall@birketts.co.uk) can supply a specimen scheme and answer questions of a legal nature.

The archdeacons will be pleased to help with anxieties about control, independence, management etc.