



Serving on the PCC at St Peter's

A Short Guide for PCC Members

Purpose of this guide

This guide is intended to give new PCC members a clear, encouraging and practical introduction to serving on the PCC at St Peter's. It does not replace Church of England rules, charity law, diocesan guidance, or St Peter's policies. It explains the main responsibilities and points to the documents and people who can help.

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1. Welcome

Thank you for being willing to serve on the PCC at St Peter's. PCC membership is a real responsibility, but it is not meant to be an impossible one. You are not expected to arrive as an expert in church governance, finance, buildings, safeguarding, employment, or charity law. You are expected to serve faithfully, ask good questions, read papers carefully, pray for the church, and take part in shared decision-making for the good of St Peter's and its mission.

The PCC works best when its members bring wisdom, honesty, humility, and care. Some decisions are practical; some are financial; some are pastoral; some concern long-term mission and stewardship. In all of them, the aim is to serve Christ, build up the church family, care for those who come among us, and act responsibly as a Church of England parish and registered charity.

A helpful starting point. You do not need to know everything. You do need to take the role seriously, participate constructively, and be willing to learn.

2. What the PCC is

The Parochial Church Council, usually called the PCC, is the main governing body of the parish. At St Peter's, the PCC is responsible, together with the incumbent, for promoting the whole mission of the Church in the parish: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

St Peter's PCC is also a registered charity. This means PCC members are charity trustees. That does not mean that each PCC member personally runs every aspect of church life. It does mean that PCC members share responsibility for ensuring that St Peter's is governed well, uses its resources properly, complies with relevant law and Church of England requirements, and remains accountable.

PCC role	What this means in practice
Church of England body	The PCC operates within the Church Representation Rules and relevant Church of England legislation.
Charity trustee body	PCC members share legal responsibility for the governance of the charity.
Local leadership body	The PCC helps set direction, oversee resources, manage risk, and support the church's mission.
Collective decision-making body	Individual members contribute to decisions, but the PCC acts collectively.

The PCC is not simply an administrative committee. It is one of the ways in which St Peter's seeks to order its life wisely, accountably and prayerfully.

3. PCC membership at St Peter's

PCC members are appointed or elected under the Church Representation Rules. At St Peter's, the PCC normally includes:

- the Vicar, who normally chairs the PCC;
- the Churchwardens;
- two Deanery Synod representatives, who serve for three years and sit on PCC ex officio;
- nine elected PCC members, normally serving three-year terms;
- any other members provided for under the Church Representation Rules.

The PCC elects a Vice-Chair, who chairs meetings when needed in the Vicar's absence. The Vice-Chair is often, but not always, a Churchwarden.

PCC membership begins immediately after election or appointment. New PCC members should receive this guide, be added to PCC communications, complete the required onboarding steps, and be allocated to a Governance Group as soon as practicable.

4. How PCC meetings work

PCC meetings usually take place on Monday evenings in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Meetings are usually held in the church hall, occasionally online. They normally begin at 7.30pm and the aim is to finish by 9.30pm.

Papers are normally circulated by the PCC Secretary by email during the week before the meeting. Papers are also stored in the Office Dropbox. PCC members are asked to read the papers in advance wherever possible, so that meeting time can be used well for prayerful discussion, questions, decisions and oversight.

Printed copies of papers can be made available by special request. Our normal practice is to use digital papers where possible, to reduce printing costs, administration and environmental impact.

Before each PCC meeting	During and after the meeting
Read the agenda and papers in advance.	Take part constructively and listen carefully to others.
Send apologies to the PCC Secretary if you cannot attend.	Declare any conflicts of interest when they arise.
Tell the Chair or Secretary in advance if you know of a possible conflict of interest.	Respect confidentiality and collective responsibility.
Bring questions, concerns or comments in a constructive spirit.	Follow up any actions you have agreed to take.

Minutes are circulated to PCC members. Draft minutes are also posted on the church noticeboard. PCC meetings must be quorate under the Church Representation Rules. In ordinary circumstances, at least one-third of PCC members must be present, and the majority of those present must be lay persons. For an emergency meeting, the quorum is a majority of PCC members. If there is any doubt, the Chair and Secretary should check the current Church Representation Rules.

5. Serving through Governance Groups

St Peter's uses Governance Groups to help the PCC give proper attention to important areas of church life and charity governance. These groups do not replace the PCC. They are advisory and recommendatory. Their role is to look at matters in more detail, identify issues that need attention, prepare recommendations, and report back to the full PCC.

Each PCC member is normally expected to serve on one Governance Group. This does not mean that you need to be an expert. It means that you are willing to help the PCC take shared responsibility for an area of its work, ask good questions, notice risks or opportunities, and support clear reporting to the PCC. Occasionally someone may serve on more than one Group if needed.

Each Governance Group has a chair. Non-PCC members may serve on Governance Groups as advisers or volunteers where their skills or experience are helpful. The groups are expected to report to each PCC meeting, though there may be occasions when there is nothing substantial to report.

Governance Group	Usual focus
Buildings	Oversight of the church building, hall, fabric, repairs, maintenance, permissions, and longer-term restoration or redevelopment planning.
Finance	Oversight of budgets, accounts, reserves, restricted funds, financial controls, stewardship and financial reporting.
HR and Remuneration	Oversight of staffing matters, role clarity, remuneration, employment arrangements and appropriate support for paid staff.
Risk and Compliance	Oversight of the risk register, key policies, legal and regulatory compliance, data protection, health and safety, and related governance processes.
Safeguarding	Oversight of safeguarding policy, safer recruitment, training compliance, safeguarding culture, and reporting to PCC.

Remember! A Governance Group helps the PCC make better decisions. It does not make you personally responsible for solving every issue in that area.

6. What it means to be a charity trustee

Because the PCC is a charity, PCC members are charity trustees. The Charity Commission describes trustees as the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing a charity and directing how it is managed and run. For PCC members, this responsibility is exercised together, through PCC meetings, Governance Groups, policies, reporting, and appropriate advice.

The six main trustee duties can be understood in plain terms as follows:

Trustee duty	Plain-English meaning for PCC members
Purpose	Keep St Peter's focused on its charitable purposes and the mission of the Church.
Compliance	Work within Church of England rules, charity law, and St Peter's own policies.
Best interests	Make decisions for the good of St Peter's as a whole, not for personal advantage or private loyalties.
Resources	Use money, buildings, staff time, volunteer effort and other resources responsibly.
Care and skill	Prepare properly, ask questions, take advice where needed, and make informed decisions.
Accountability	Be able to explain decisions, keep proper records, and report as required.

This may sound formal, but much of it is simply good Christian stewardship: being careful with what has been entrusted to us, seeking wise counsel, avoiding carelessness, and acting with integrity.

NB. PCC members are not normally personally liable for PCC decisions or debts, provided they act honestly, within their authority, with reasonable care, and in the best interests of the PCC as a charity.

7. Key areas of PCC responsibility

The PCC does not run every activity in the church day by day. Many areas of ministry are led by clergy, staff, Churchwardens, ministry leaders and volunteers. The PCC's role is to provide appropriate oversight, ensure good governance, and make significant decisions where needed.

Mission and church life

The PCC works with the incumbent in promoting the mission of the Church in the parish. This includes worship, discipleship, evangelism, pastoral care, children's and youth ministry, community engagement and the use of St Peter's premises for public benefit.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a shared PCC responsibility. PCC members should understand the importance of safer church culture, complete required training, support the Parish Safeguarding Officer, and make sure safeguarding remains visible in PCC oversight. St Peter's Parish Safeguarding Officer is Clare Reid. New PCC members are asked to complete Basic Awareness, Foundations, and Domestic Abuse Awareness training before attending their first PCC meeting. The key document is the Parish Safeguarding Policy ([available here](#)).

Finance

The PCC is responsible for financial oversight. The Treasurer reports to the PCC, and the Finance Governance Group supports detailed review. St Peter's Finance Policy sets out the detailed controls, including budgets, reporting, expenses, approval levels and financial records.

Reserves

St Peter's reserves policy is to seek to hold unrestricted reserves of no less than 25% of the PCC-approved annual operating budget. This is intended to help the PCC meet its obligations, including staffing costs, as they fall due.

Buildings and premises

The PCC is responsible for the stewardship of buildings and premises for which it has legal responsibility, including the church hall, and for appropriate oversight of repairs, maintenance, permissions, safety, accessibility and longer-term planning.

Risk and compliance

The PCC should be aware of significant risks and ensure that appropriate mitigations, policies and reporting arrangements are in place. This includes safeguarding, finance, buildings, health and safety, data protection, employment, insurance, and reputational risk.

Staff, volunteers and culture

The PCC has responsibilities where St Peter's employs staff and relies on volunteers. PCC members should support a culture that is gracious, fair, clear and safe, and should avoid gossip, factional behaviour, or inappropriate interference in matters that belong to line management or pastoral leadership.

8. Conflicts of interest

PCC members must act in the best interests of the PCC as a charity. A conflict of interest may arise where a PCC member's personal interests, financial interests, family connections, business relationships, or duties to another organisation could affect - or could reasonably be seen to affect - their judgement.

Conflicts are not unusual, and declaring one is not a sign that anyone has done anything wrong. The important thing is to identify conflicts early, handle them properly, and record what has been done.

PCC members should tell the Chair as soon as they become aware of a possible conflict, ideally when the agenda is circulated. They should also declare the conflict at the meeting when the relevant item is reached. Depending on the nature of the conflict, the member may be asked to withdraw from the discussion and decision. The declaration and how it was handled will be recorded in the minutes.

9. Confidentiality, trust and communication

PCC members will sometimes receive or discuss information that is personal, pastoral, financial, safeguarding-related, staff-related, commercially sensitive, or still under discussion. Confidentiality helps us speak honestly, care for people well, and communicate decisions clearly. It is not about secrecy, but about handling information wisely and sharing it at the right time, in the right way, and with the right people.

Please treat PCC papers, draft minutes, sensitive discussion and unfinished decisions with appropriate care. Once the PCC has made a decision, the PCC should be clear about what may be communicated more widely, by whom, and when. If you are unsure whether something may be shared, please check with the Vicar, PCC Secretary, or the relevant Governance Group chair before passing it on.

Email between meetings

Email can be useful for sharing papers, clarifying factual points, and progressing agreed actions. It is usually less helpful for lengthy debate, sensitive pastoral matters, staff matters, safeguarding issues, or complex decisions. Where an issue needs real discussion, it should normally be brought to a PCC meeting, Standing Committee, or the relevant Governance Group.

Public comment and social media

PCC members should be careful when commenting publicly about PCC business, especially on social media. Please avoid sharing confidential information, presenting personal views as PCC decisions, or making public comments that make it harder for the PCC to communicate clearly and graciously.

10. Raising concerns constructively

PCC members should feel able to raise concerns. Good governance depends on people asking questions, noticing risks, and speaking honestly. The aim is not to avoid disagreement, but to handle disagreement in a way that is truthful, charitable and useful.

Where possible, concerns should be raised early, directly and graciously with the appropriate person: the Vicar, Churchwardens, PCC Secretary, Treasurer, Parish Safeguarding Officer, Church Administrator, or relevant Governance Group chair. Safeguarding concerns must always be handled under the Parish Safeguarding Policy and should not be treated as ordinary complaints or interpersonal disagreements.

If you are unsure where to take a concern, speak to the Vicar, a Churchwarden, or the PCC Secretary. Where a concern involves one of those people, speak to another appropriate officer who is not involved.

11. What PCC members are expected to do

- Attend PCC meetings where possible, and send apologies if you cannot attend.
- Read papers in advance and come prepared to discuss them.
- Pray for St Peter's, its leaders, congregation, volunteers, staff and wider parish.
- Serve on a Governance Group and help it report clearly to the PCC.
- Ask questions where something is unclear.
- Declare conflicts of interest promptly.
- Complete required safeguarding training and onboarding steps.
- Respect confidentiality and communicate carefully.
- Support the PCC's collective decisions, even where discussion has been robust.
- Raise concerns constructively and through appropriate channels.

12. What PCC members are not expected to do

- You are not expected to be an expert in every area of church governance.
- You are not expected to solve every problem personally.
- You are not expected to represent a faction, friendship group, ministry area or personal interest.
- You are not expected to manage staff or volunteers unless you have been given a specific role that requires this.
- You are not expected to read every external guidance document in full before you begin.
- You are not expected to make decisions alone. The PCC acts collectively and can seek advice where needed.

The heart of the role: Serve faithfully, prepare carefully, listen well, ask good questions, and help the PCC act wisely for the good of St Peter's.

13. New PCC member onboarding

The PCC Secretary and Church Administrator normally coordinate onboarding for new PCC members, with help from the Vicar, Treasurer, Parish Safeguarding Officer and Governance Group chairs where needed.

Step	Notes
Receive this handbook	For reading after election or appointment.
Be added to PCC email circulation	Papers are normally circulated by email.

Know how to access Dropbox papers	Documents are stored online and can also be requested from the Church Administrator.
Complete trustee eligibility declaration	Recommended for all new PCC members.
Complete fit and proper person declaration	Recommended where required or adopted by the PCC.
Complete conflict of interest declaration	Recommended, and to be updated when circumstances change.
Complete safeguarding training	Basic Awareness, Foundations, and Domestic Abuse Awareness before first PCC meeting where possible.
Receive Parish Safeguarding Policy	Read and keep for reference.
Be allocated to a Governance Group	Normally one group per PCC member.
Know who to contact	PCC Secretary, Church Administrator, Vicar, Churchwardens, Treasurer, Parish Safeguarding Officer and Governance Group chair.

A simple first 90 days

Timing	Helpful aim
Before first meeting	Complete safeguarding training, read this guide, receive papers, and ask any immediate questions.
First meeting	Listen, learn the rhythm of the meeting, and note any unfamiliar terms or processes.
First 1-2 months	Join a Governance Group and understand what it is currently working on.
By around 90 days	Be clear where papers and policies are stored, who to ask for help, and how you can contribute well.

Appendix A: Key policies and documents

The handbook is deliberately short. The documents below provide the detailed policy framework. They are stored online in Dropbox and are available on request from the Church Administrator. Some items may be marked as coming soon while the PCC develops or updates them.

This section is still under construction. It is hoped it will be completed by end-June 2026.

Document	Purpose / note
Parish Safeguarding Policy	Detailed safeguarding commitments, responsibilities and reporting arrangements.
Finance Policy	Detailed financial controls, reporting arrangements, reserves, expenses, approvals, banking and related procedures.
Conflict of Interest Policy	How PCC members identify, declare, handle and record conflicts of interest.
Welcome, Dignity and Fair Treatment Policy	Culture, conduct, welcome, dignity, raising concerns and fair treatment in church life.
Risk Register	Main risks, mitigations and ownership. Coming soon / under development if not yet finalised.
Data Protection / Privacy Policy	How personal data is handled and protected. Coming soon / to be confirmed.
Health and Safety Policy	Arrangements for health, safety and premises-related responsibilities. Coming soon / to be confirmed.
Complaints Procedure	How complaints or concerns are handled. Coming soon / to be confirmed.
Safer Recruitment Policy	Recruitment and checks for roles involving trust, ministry or safeguarding responsibilities. Coming soon / to be confirmed.
Hall Hire Terms / Hire Agreement	Terms for use of St Peter's premises by outside groups and others.
Staff Handbook / HR Policies	Employment and staff-related policies, where relevant.
Governance Group notes or terms of reference	Short descriptions exist in this guide; fuller terms may be developed later. Coming soon.

Latest Annual Report and Financial Statements	Annual narrative and financial reporting for the PCC as a registered charity.
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Appendix B: External signposts

The PCC may refer to external guidance where needed. The main sources are:

- Charity Commission: The Essential Trustee and trustee guidance
- Church of England: Church Representation Rules
- Church of England: safeguarding policy, practice guidance and training guidance
- Chelmsford Diocese: PCC, parish administration, safeguarding, buildings and governance guidance
- Parish Resources: PCC governance, finance and charity resources

This guide should be updated if Church of England rules, Charity Commission guidance, diocesan guidance, or St Peter's own policies materially change.

Appendix C: Quick reference checklist

Question	Good PCC practice
Have I read the papers?	Read enough to understand the issues and decisions needed.
Do I have a conflict?	Declare it early, preferably before the meeting if known.
Is this confidential?	Treat papers and sensitive discussion with care; ask before sharing.
Is this a safeguarding concern?	Use the Parish Safeguarding Policy and involve the Parish Safeguarding Officer or appropriate person.
Is this a financial or legal issue?	Make sure the Treasurer, relevant Governance Group, or PCC has proper oversight.
Is this something for email?	Use email for facts and actions; bring sensitive or complex issues to the right meeting.
Do I need help?	Ask the PCC Secretary, Church Administrator, Vicar, Churchwardens, Treasurer, Parish Safeguarding Officer, or Governance Group chair.