

Governance Report to PCC

September 2026 – covering July and August

The main governance work over the summer has been to bring a number of long-running pieces of work into a much clearer and more usable form. The aim is simple: to make sure St Peter's is well run, that responsibilities are clear, and that the PCC can exercise proper oversight without having to wade through unnecessary detail.

Policies and governance

A substantial set of policies and governance documents has now been prepared for PCC consideration. These cover areas such as safeguarding, conduct, complaints, data protection, IT, health and safety, volunteering, social media, whistleblowing and employment.

The new [PCC Resources page](#) is intended to make this manageable. Some documents are being recommended for approval without detailed discussion; others need more targeted review; and some are there mainly for information or reference.

This has been a major piece of work, but the purpose is not to create bureaucracy. It is to move us away from relying too heavily on informal custom, and towards having clearer expectations, responsibilities and processes when something goes wrong or a difficult decision has to be made.

Risk management

A more systematic approach to risk has also been developed. This now includes a Governance and Risk Management Policy, a strategic Risk Register, a Risk Assessment Procedure, and operational risk assessments for areas including SPK, Tiny Tots, church and hall use, pastoral visiting, Jericho Road, Foodbank, lone working, Sunday services and external hire.

The key point is that the PCC is not being asked to approve every operational risk assessment line by line. Those documents will remain live and be updated as circumstances change. The PCC's role is to approve the overall framework, understand the principal risks, and have confidence that practical actions are being followed through.

Safeguarding and safer recruitment

Considerable work has continued on safeguarding, DBS requirements and safer recruitment.

This has included reviewing which roles require which checks and training, and making sure the new Ministry Role Descriptions reflect those requirements correctly.

There has also been further work around ministries such as Jericho Road, where some of those with whom the church has contact may on occasion be vulnerable adults. The aim is to make sure that people are properly protected, while keeping the safeguards proportionate to the ministry actually being undertaken.

Volunteers and ministry roles

A comprehensive set of Ministry Role Descriptions has now been developed, alongside a Volunteer Policy and Volunteer Agreement. The purpose is not that every volunteer receives a huge handbook. Rather, people should increasingly be given a clear description of the role they are actually doing: what it involves, who supports them, what training or safeguarding requirements apply, and where the boundaries of the role lie. This should make volunteering clearer and safer, and should also make it easier to support people well when roles need to change.

Finance

The Treasurer vacancy remains, with interim arrangements continuing while a longer-term solution is sought.

Work is also continuing on a revised Finance Policy. This will not be ready for approval at the September PCC and will come back at a later stage. The aim is to retain sound financial controls while making responsibilities and delegation clearer, particularly when different people are sharing parts of the finance function.

Buildings, safety and compliance

A number of practical matters have also progressed.

The principal C2 electrical defect identified in the church EICR has now been rectified. Further C3 recommendations are being reviewed and will be dealt with proportionately.

Work continues following the recent fire-safety visit, including revision of the Fire Risk Assessment, Fire Action Plan, evacuation plans and housekeeping arrangements. These are expected to come to PCC later in the autumn.

There has also been correspondence with Cushman & Wakefield and the Archdeacon concerning the Co-op Bank fire-escape route through the churchyard. We want to be constructive, but the legal, property and faculty implications need to be understood before any permanent arrangement or works are agreed.

General Synod

The current five-year General Synod term has now come to an end. The July group of sessions covered a number of matters relevant to the wider Church of England, including Living in Love and Faith, safeguarding and redress, clergy conduct, governance, diocesan safeguarding arrangements, digital communications and the national Church budget.

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee met on Monday 10 August. Key points included:

- agreed that PCC papers should be shorter and more focused, which has shaped the new September reporting format;
- reviewed rotas and volunteer capacity, including SPK, Tiny Tots and stewarding;
- agreed a constructive response to Archdeacon Ruth's letter on Colchester Connects / SMMIB, while retaining the concerns previously raised and seeking a wider conversation about St Peter's contribution to the Colchester Area and Diocese;
- discussed the Co-op Bank fire-escape route through the churchyard;
- agreed to replace the Vicarage colour printer.

Looking ahead

The main task now is to move from preparation to implementation: approve the key September documents, finish the remaining safeguarding and role-mapping work, continue actions arising from the risk assessments, complete the fire-safety documentation, and continue work on finance and Treasurer arrangements.

The overall aim is straightforward: clearer responsibilities, fewer gaps, better protection for people, and enough information for the PCC to exercise proper oversight without becoming involved in every operational detail.