

# PARISH COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

## ST AUGUSTINE'S DARLINGTON

### OBJECTIVES

1. To foster and develop all aspects of the parish community to enable each member to fulfil his/her baptismal vocation by building up the body of Christ.
2. To discuss and reflect upon the needs of the parish and to initiate programmes of action to meet those needs.
3. To ensure all active groups communicate with and within the parish.
4. To utilise or call upon the expertise available within the parish to the benefit of the community.

### *Nature and Purpose of the Parish Council*

1. The purpose of this constitution is to enable the Parish Priest (here meaning any priest appointed to be in charge of the Parish by the Bishop) to share responsibility for the ministry of the Church in this place with all the faithful, in a spirit of partnership and mutual service between clergy and laity, in the sacramental grace of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, and in accordance with the Code of Canon Law together with the constant teaching of the Universal Church.
2. There shall be a Parish Council ('the Council') and a Finance Committee ('the Committee') in accordance with Canons 536 and 537 respectively and any directions made by the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.
  - 2.1. The Parish Priest alone is responsible to the Bishop for the pastoral care and temporal goods of the Parish under Canon Law and to the Board of Directors of the Diocese under Charity Law. Accordingly any resolution of the Council requires the assent of the Parish Priest, who will act as President of the Council.
  - 2.2. The Council helps the Parish Priest to exercise his leadership of the pastoral care of the Parish. The Council co-ordinates the work of the Parish, by providing a forum where issues can be raised and changes or initiatives can be proposed, and by encouraging and empowering other groups and individuals to take responsibility for particular tasks and areas of activity. The Council exercises a strategic function in consultation with the Parish Priest, identifying long-term goals and short-term objectives, and designing those procedures and processes by which the mission of the Church can be promoted by the Parish as a whole.

*Responsibilities of the Parish Priest and Laity to each other*

3. The Parish Priest will consult the Council as appropriate, before making any significant decision affecting the life, worship, mission or property of the Parish.
4. Exceptionally, in case of urgency, the Parish Priest will consult between meetings of the Council with the Chair, or Vice-Chair, who may require the involvement of one or more other members, and any decision will be reported to the next meeting.
5. Individual members of the Council are expected:
  - 5.1. To attend every meeting unless prevented by other serious responsibilities or incapacity. If you are unable to attend then a deputy from your group should be nominated and the chair or secretary informed.
  - 5.2. To make use of opportunities for training and formation in their role;
  - 5.3. To accept the need to reach consensus (if possible) and to respect the ultimate responsibility of the Parish Priest for the Parish.

THE PARISH COUNCIL  
*Composition of the Council*

6. The total number of members of the Council shall not exceed sixteen in addition to the Parish Priest.
  - 6.1. The Parish Priest shall be member ex officio.
  - 6.2. The Chair of the Finance Committee shall be a member ex officio and may appoint another member of the Committee as a representative.
  - 6.3. The Head teacher of St Augustine's Academy and a representative from Carmel Academy will be invited as a member ex officio or appoint a deputy.
  - 6.4. The Parish Priest may nominate parishioners with particular expertise to the Council as ex officio members as required for a dedicated period.
  - 6.5. The Council will include representatives nominated by Parish Groups. Deputies may be appointed if required.
  - 6.6. Two committee members shall be elected by ballot of parishioners attending Sunday Masses.

7. Every member of the Council shall be given upon appointment a copy of this constitution.

*Meetings of the Council*

8. The Council shall ordinarily meet at least three times per annum on dates to be agreed. Every meeting shall open and close with a prayer.

- 8.1 The Chair of the Council will publish an annual resume of parish council activities.

9. The quorum shall be half the lay members of the Council together with the President.

10. Minutes of Council meetings shall be posted on the parish noticeboard, ~~and~~ website and be available from the Parish Office.

*Officers and committees*

11. The Council shall include the following officers:

- 11.1. The Parish Priest is President of the Council.

- 11.2. The Council shall elect a Chair to hold office for three years but will be eligible for re-election. The Chair is responsible for the orderly conduct of meetings, including proposing the agenda after consulting the President, discerning the resolution of a meeting of any motion, and approving a draft of the minutes before circulation.

- 11.3. The Council shall elect a Secretary, whose role is to facilitate communication between members, with parishioners and with external bodies.

- 11.4. The Council shall elect a deputy for the Chair at the first meeting of year, who will succeed upon a vacancy, at which time a new deputy will be elected.

- 11.5. Council members shall be elected for a period of three years but are eligible for re-election

12. The Council may appoint advisory committees or working parties consisting of Council members and others with professional skills.

13. This Constitution can be reviewed/amended at the discretion of the Parish Priest in consultation with the Council.