

Parish Guide to preparing for and running Annual Meetings

This guide covers:

- What the annual meetings are
- The advance notice which needs to be given of the meetings and of revising or preparing a new Electoral Roll
- Business at the meetings: elections and reports
- Where to look for more information
- A sample agenda

This guide assumes your parish has not passed a scheme to amend Part 9 of the Church Representation Rules as they apply to your parish.

What are the annual meetings?

Before 31 May every year, Church of England parishes must hold their annual meetings. Technically two meetings must be held in each parish (although they are normally held at the same time):

- A meeting of the parishioners, sometimes called the Annual Vestry Meeting, where the main business is to elect churchwardens.
- The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), where the main business is to receive and discuss a report from the minister and PCC on the last year, to receive the PCC's annual accounts, and to elect people to the PCC and Deanery Synod.

Giving notice

The forms for the notices mentioned here are online on www.parishresources.org.uk/pccs/apcms

Revising or preparing a new Electoral Roll

Before the annual meetings parishes must either revise their electoral roll or, in 2025 and every sixth year after that, prepare a new electoral roll. Notice of revising the roll must be displayed for at least fourteen days, ending between fifteen and twenty eight days before the APCM, while notice of renewing the roll must be displayed from at least two months before the APCM. Church Representation Rules 1 to 8 (link below) set these processes out in full. The names on the revised or new rolls must be published for 14 days before the APCM.

Meeting of the parishioners

A meeting of the parishioners must be convened by the minister, or if that is not possible, the churchwardens. To do this, a notice signed by the minister or a churchwarden must be displayed on or near the main doors of the parish church and every other building licensed for public worship, for at least the two Sundays before the day of the meeting.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

A notice signed by the minister (or if that is not possible, the vice-chair of the PCC, the PCC secretary, or someone else appointed by the PCC) must be displayed on or near the main door of every church in the parish and every building licensed for public worship. The notice must be displayed for at least the two Sundays before the day of the meeting.

Elections and appointments

You can download nomination forms from <https://www.parishresources.org.uk/pccs/apcms>.

Election of Churchwardens

Electing churchwardens is the only business of the meeting of parishioners. Any lay person who is either on the Electoral Roll of the parish, or who lives in the parish and is on the local government register of electors, can propose or second candidates and can vote.

To be eligible, candidates must be baptised and must be on the Electoral Roll of the parish, twenty-one years old or older and actual communicants (have received communion three times in the last year and are confirmed or “ready and desirous” of being confirmed). There are also several disqualifying criteria, which are explained on the nomination form. Normally no one is allowed to be a churchwarden in more than one parish or for more than six years consecutively.

Nomination forms must be given to the minister before the start of the meeting. If there are not more candidates than there are places, (e.g. one or two people stand for two places) the candidates are elected automatically. If there are more candidates than places a vote must take place, either by ballot or a show of hands.

Churchwardens are elected for a year at a time. Elected candidates do not become churchwardens until they are admitted to the office by the Bishop or an Archdeacon. Outgoing churchwardens continue until their replacement is admitted, or if no one is elected in their place, until 31 July.

Election of Deanery Synod and PCC members

These elections happen at the APCM. All lay Deanery Synod members must be elected in 2020 and then every third year, while PCC members are elected every year. Normally PCC members are elected for three years and one third of the elected members are elected each year. (Some parishes however pass a resolution to elect PCC members for one-year terms.) If a resignation or a place left vacant after an election means that a place is vacant part way through a term, the APCM can elect someone to fill the place for the remainder of the original term of office. If the APCM will not be within two months’ time the PCC can fill casual vacancies instead.

To be eligible, candidates must be at least 16 years old, have been on the Electoral Roll for at least 6 months (unless they are under 18 years old), be an actual communicant, and must not be disqualified (see the notice of the APCM for details of disqualification). They must be proposed and seconded by people on the Electoral Roll, before or during the APCM.

If there are not more candidates than places they are declared to be elected without a vote. Otherwise, voting can either be done using ballot papers or by a show of hands. Anyone on the Electoral Roll can attend and vote for as many candidates as there are places, but cannot vote more than once for any candidate. Draws are decided by casting lots. Parishes have some options for changing this, including adopting postal voting, which take effect a year after the decision is made.

Appointment of independent examiners or auditors

It is common for the PCC to propose an independent examiner or auditor for the APCM to approve. Independent examiners or auditors must not be members of the PCC, and should be competent to do the work. More on the role of an independent examiner is online here: www.parishresources.org.uk.

Written Reports

There are a number of reports that need to be provided for the meeting and which can be discussed. These can be combined into a single document or presented separately.

Annual report of the PCC

This report should be “on the proceedings of the parochial church council and the activities of the parish generally”. One requirement is that the report must state whether the PCC has complied with its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops’ guidance on safeguarding vulnerable children and adults (under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016).

Financial Statements

Producing the financial statements of the PCC each year and arranging for them to be independently examined (or audited) is normally one of the major responsibilities of the PCC treasurer. Once the PCC has approved the financial statements, they should be signed by the PCC’s chair and published, electronically or otherwise, for at least seven days before the APCM.

Electoral Roll

The annual meeting must receive a report on changes in the Electoral Roll. Usually this is simply the numbers of people added and removed, and the total number of people on the Roll.

Fabric report

Under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018, the churchwardens are responsible for producing this report which should cover any actions taken or proposed to protect or maintain the church building or articles, particularly anything recommended after a Quinquennial Inspection. The report must be approved by the PCC, who can amend it, before the APCM.

Deanery Synod report

This report summarises the work of the Deanery Synod during the year.

After the meetings

After the annual meetings, the Diocesan Office will contact you to ask for details of the people elected to be Churchwardens and Deanery Synod members, for the number of people on your electoral roll, and for copies of the PCC’s annual report and financial statements.

The results of elections at the APCM must be published on or near the main door of every church in the parish for at least 14 days.

For more information

The rules for the meetings, reports and elections summarised above are:

- The Churchwardens Measure 2001 contains the rules for a meeting of the parishioners and the election of churchwardens. See: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2001/1/contents
- The Church Representation Rules contain the rules for APCMs, as well as parish Electoral Rolls and the membership of and elections to PCCs and Synods. See: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/church-representation-rules>

Sample agenda for a parish's annual meetings

St Mary's Church: Agenda for the meeting of the parishioners to elect churchwardens and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

To be held in St Mary's Church at 3pm on Sunday 24 May 2020.

Meeting to elect churchwardens

1) *Opening prayers and welcome from the Vicar**

Revd Lara

2) Minutes of the last meeting

To approve the minutes of the meeting on 21 April 2019.

3) Election of Churchwardens

To elect two churchwardens.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1) Minutes of the last meeting

To approve the minutes of the meeting on 21 April 2019.

2) Reports

The person giving the report will either present it, or simply take questions if appropriate.

a. *Vicar's report: 2020 vision**

Revd Lara, Vicar

b. St Mary's Church and PCC in 2019

Courtney Walsh, Vice Chair of the PCC

c. Electoral Roll changes

Viv Richards, Electoral Roll Officer

d. Fabric Report

Clive Lloyd, Churchwarden

e. Deanery Synod in 2019

Chris Gayle, Deanery Synod member

f. Finance report

Garfield Sobers, PCC Treasurer

3) Elections and appointments

a. Election of 3 Deanery Synod members **

b. Election of 3 PCC members

c. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

* These items may not be required. *Items in italics are optional and can be moved as appropriate.*

** Deanery Synod elections are due in 2020 and then every third year. Elections to fill casual vacancies can take place in other years.