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Guidance for Renewing and Revising Parish/Chaplaincy Constitutions

These notes have been prepared to try to offer some assistance in the review and revision of Chaplaincy/Parish Constitutions in light of the new Diocesan Constitution and to point out some of the areas which may particularly need modification.

Please do not hesitate to contact your archdeacon or the diocesan office, if you would value further support or guidance.

Notes from reading the Diocesan Constitution

1. A new Diocesan Constitution was confirmed by the Diocesan Synod in February 2020 and came into effect immediately. It is available for reading and downloading on the Diocesan website.
2. In Chapter One No. 1. Citation, it states that 'any Chaplaincy/Parish Constitution should be consistent with this Constitution'.
3. Therefore, it is important that Chaplaincy/Parish Constitutions are reviewed, and modified as necessary, within a reasonable time scale.
4. If there is good reason for a longer period to be desired before reviewing the Chaplaincy/Parish Constitution, the Chaplaincy Council may make a written request to the Bishop. If he considers it appropriate the Bishop may 'vary the detailed provisions of this Constitution so far as it affects that Chaplaincy, for such period as he may determine' (Ch4, 17. (a) (iii)).
5. Chapter Three of the Diocesan Constitution particularly concerns Chaplaincy/Parish Governance.
6. Each Chaplaincy/Parish shall elect two lay representatives to the House of Laity of the Diocesan Synod. Each representative shall serve for one year but may be re-elected (Chapter 2. 4. (c) (i)). The term of office of each elected lay representative shall begin on the first day of Synod and shall cease on the day preceding the first day of the following Synod (Chapter 2. 4. (c) (iv)). As Synod takes place annually in February, it will make sense to elect the lay representatives in the Autumn rather than at the Annual Church Meeting.
7. If a lay representative is elected to the Standing and Finance Committee of the Diocesan Synod, the Chaplaincy/Parish shall elect a new representative at the next regular election for the Synod.

8. Parish lay representatives to Synod are not required to be members of the Chaplaincy/Parish Council in order to be elected, but become full voting members of the Council by virtue of being lay representatives of the House of Laity of the Diocesan Synod.
9. If they are already elected members of the Chaplaincy/Parish Council they remain as full voting members of the Chaplaincy/Parish Council even if their time of elected service on the Chaplaincy/Parish Council comes to an end during the time in which they are lay representatives (Chapter 3, 15. (a) (v)).

Notes from reading some Chaplaincy/Parish Constitutions

1. Constitutions should define the way in which two lay representatives for the House of Laity of the Synod will be elected (see notes 6-8 above).
2. Lay representatives to Synod should be included in the list of those who are full members of the Church Council.
3. The Chaplaincy/Parish Council Constitution should make clear whether co-opted members (no more than 1/5 of the elected membership of the Council) are voting or non-voting members.
4. Qualification for membership of the Electoral Roll should be in accord with Chapter Three 13. of the Diocesan Constitution.
5. It is usual that a two-week period is observed prior to the ACM when names may not be added to the Electoral Roll. Names may begin to be added again immediately following the ACM.
6. The election or appointment of churchwardens is made annually at the ACM. Chaplaincies/Parishes will agree in their Constitution any limit to the number of times a churchwarden may be re-elected or re-appointed.
7. The appointment of a new Chaplain/Parish Priest shall remain within the authority of the Bishop, in accordance with consultative procedures. The Chaplaincy/Parish Constitution should recognise this while making provision for the appointment of three Chaplaincy/Parish representatives to participate in the appointment process.
8. In Cyprus, the Parish Constitution should refer to the responsibility of the Parish or Church Council to the Jerusalem and East Mission Trust (Cyprus) for preserving and maintaining the structure, furnishing and equipment of the Church buildings and assets in its care.