

DIOCESE OF NOTTINGHAM

STATUTES FOR PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEES

1. The Parish Priest as Legal Representative of the Parish

(a) 'The parish priest is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ's faithful, in accordance with the law.'⁴

(b) Since the pastoral care of the parish entrusted to him is vested in the parish priest, he is the legal representative of the parish, in canon and English law, and is to ensure that the temporal goods of the parish are administered in accordance with canons 1281-1288 and, without prejudice to canon 22, any relevant civil legislation currently in force in England & Wales, together with any oath which he has sworn upon appointment concerning the administration of the temporal goods of the Church.⁵

(c) In relation to his duties according to the law of England & Wales, the authority of the parish priest is limited to transactions lower than the limit established by the Bishop or the Board of Directors of the Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees (hereafter the 'Board of Directors') and published in the Parish Administration Manual.

(d) For the purpose of this norm, and without prejudice to canon 540, §2, the term 'parish priest' includes 'parochial administrator'.²

The Parish Finance Committee

(a) Each parish is required to have a finance committee, to be known as the 'Parish Finance Committee' and hereafter called the 'committee', whose members assist the parish priest in administering the temporal goods of the parish, in accordance with canon law and the law of England & Wales.⁶

(b) It is governed by the universal law, whether laid down in the Code of Canon Law or in any other universal or particular law, together with these statutes and any other norms which may be promulgated by the Bishop.

(c) These statutes are promulgated by the Bishop, to whom it pertains to revise them following consultation with the Council of Priests and Board of Directors.

⁴ Canon 519.

⁵ Cf. canons 532 & 1283 1°; Prot. No. 2011/22.

⁶ Cf. canon 537. 44

3. Membership of the Committee

(a) The committee shall consist of the parish priest and at least two other members. Others may attend meetings as observers if there is a matter on which their expertise would be beneficial.

(b) The other members of the committee are appointed by the parish priest; they are appointed for five years, but when this period has expired they may be appointed for further terms of five years.

(c) Any other priest working in the parish may be appointed as an additional member of the committee at the discretion of the parish priest.

(d) At least one member of the committee ought to have expertise in the fields of finance, banking or accountancy.

(e) The parish bookkeeper should be in attendance at all meetings to give a narrative on the accounts if not formally appointed to be a member of the committee.

(f) Members of the committee should ordinarily be in full communion with the Catholic Church. At his discretion, the parish priest may appoint members of other Churches or ecclesial communities to the committee.

(g) Membership of the committee does not lapse when the parish becomes vacant, although it pertains to the new parish priest to confirm members in post within three months of his appointment.

(h) If a priest is parish priest of more than one parish, he may, if circumstances suggest, hold joint meetings of the finance committees of those parishes.

4. Meetings of the Committee

(a) The committee shall meet at least three times a year.

(b) Without prejudice to article 3, the parish priest should preside at meetings of the finance committee; he may delegate the chairing of meetings to another member of the committee, but must be present for such meetings.⁷

(c) Minutes shall be made of each meeting, and kept in a minute book, which shall form part of the parochial archive.⁸

5. The Role of the Committee

(a) The committee is to assist and support the parish priest in the lawful, effective and efficient management of the parish's temporal goods, which are ecclesiastical goods,⁹ and may therefore only be used for the Church's proper objectives, namely 'the regulation of divine worship, the 7 Instruction on Certain Questions regarding the Cooperation of Non-Ordained Members of the Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest, 15 August 1997, Article 5, §3. 8 Cf. canon 535, §4. 9 Cf. canon 1257, §1. 45 provision of fitting support for the clergy and other ministers, and the carrying out of works of the sacred apostolate and of charity, especially for the needy'.¹⁰

(b) The committee is an advisory committee. Nevertheless, the parish priest shall consult and have regard to the opinion of the members of the committee on all matters concerning the acquisition, retention, administration and alienation of temporal goods belonging to the parish, both immoveable and moveable.

(c) The committee shall assist the parish priest in fulfilling those obligations imposed upon him by canon 1284, §1.

(d) In accordance with article 2(a) of these statutes, the committee is to help the parish priest to ensure that all legislation and guidance which concern the administration of the temporal goods of the parish in both canon law and the law of England & Wales regarding the following are applied fully in the parish:

(i) banking, bookkeeping, cash management and the oversight of all matters concerning the taking-up, counting and depositing of all collections and other monies of the parish;

(ii) fundraising; (iii) the promotion and running of the Gift Aid Scheme;

(iv) insurance;

(v) health and safety;

(vi) fire prevention; (vii) and the general maintenance of all parish property, in particular the parish church or churches and any other place of worship.

(e) The parish priest is to discuss with the committee any communication from the Bishop, the Board of Directors or an officer or employee thereof, concerning the temporal goods of the parish and the management thereof.

(f) The committee shall help the parish priest to draw up each year a budget of income and expenditure.¹¹

(g) Although it is the parish priest's responsibility to prepare an annual set of accounts or financial return for the Bishop in accordance with canon 1287, §1 and any relevant civil legislation currently in force, in whichever way is specified by the Bishop or Board, the committee shall prepare the parish accounts for his approval, or at least review them if they have been prepared by the parish priest or someone else, before their submission by the parish priest to the Finance Office on behalf of the Bishop.¹²

¹⁰ Canon 1254, §2.

¹¹ Cf. canon 1284, §2.

¹² Cf. canon 1287, §1. 46

(h) Likewise, the committee shall prepare or at least review a set of accounts to be presented by the parish priest to the faithful after the end of each financial year, concerning the goods which they have presented to the parish during that year.¹³

(i) The committee is to know the whereabouts of the inventory 'of any immoveable goods, of those moveable goods which are precious or in any way of cultural value, and of any other goods, with a description and an estimate of their value' which is to be completed by the parish priest upon his appointment, and to help him to ensure that it is kept up-to-date.¹⁴

(j) Since the faithful 'have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church',¹⁵ each member of the committee, acting individually or as a group, if he feels that the parish priest is not fulfilling his legal obligations regarding the temporal goods of the parish, in either canon law or the law of England & Wales, has the right and, if necessary, the

obligation to make this known to the Bishop, who shall investigate the matter either personally or through a delegate.¹⁶ Initial contact should be made to the Episcopal Vicar for Finance and Administration, the Financial Secretary or the Dean.

(k) The committee is not a sub-committee of the parish pastoral council established in accordance with canon 536, §1; however, it is to work with that council and should be represented on it, especially in regard to the necessary financial support of pastoral action in the parish, fundraising activities and the repair, maintenance and reordering of the parish church or churches. 6.

Accountability

(a) As the legal representative of the parish, the parish priest is responsible for the administration of all the parish's temporal goods, both immoveable and moveable; nevertheless, the Bishop and other local Ordinaries must 'carefully supervise the administration of all the goods which belong to public juridical persons subject to them',¹⁷ and so the parish priest's rights and responsibilities are without prejudice of the right to the Bishop to intervene, personally or through a delegate, where there is negligence on the parish priest's part in canon law or the law of England & Wales.¹⁸

(b) Since the parish priest is not accountable to the committee, which always and only acts in an advisory capacity, it cannot in any way be held accountable for his actions.

The above incorporates comments received at the Council of Priests meeting in January 2014 and may be updated if there are further comments.

13 Cf. canon 1287, §2.

14 Canon 1283 2°.

15 Canon 212, §3.

16 Cf. canon 212, §2.

17 Canon 1276, §1.

18 Cf. canons 532 & 1279, §1.