

GENERAL SYNOD

Parochial fees and charges for vergers and heating

A Background Paper from the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee

Introduction

1. The legislation relating to parochial fees underwent extensive revision by the General Synod in 2011. The Ecclesiastical Fees (Amendment) Measure 2011 amended the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986 (“the Measure”) making the following changes to the legal framework relating to parochial fees:
 - the replacement of the incumbent’s fee by a fee payable to the diocesan board of finance;
 - the establishment of a list of services and other matters in respect of which parochial fees may be prescribed;
 - power for the Archbishops’ Council to prescribe fees (including increases) for a period of up to five years;
 - provision of an express power to prescribe what costs and expenses are included within the statutory fees.

2. The current Parochial Fees Order¹ made by the Archbishops’ Council under the Measure specifies that in the case of marriage services and funeral services, any costs or expenses incurred in respect of routine administration, making the church available and lighting it are included in the prescribed fee payable to the PCC. That means that the PCC cannot lawfully make a charge in addition to the prescribed fee in respect of such a cost or expense in relation to a marriage or funeral service. Heating costs and the cost of vergers are not included in the prescribed fees for these services. They are, accordingly, chargeable as ‘extras’ by the PCC where they are provided.

3. The Motions brought by the Worcester Diocesan Synod seek the inclusion of the cost of providing a verger and providing heating within the prescribed fees for funerals in church and weddings.

Background

4. During 2009 and 2010 a Working Group prepared advice for the Archbishops’ Council on implementing the 2011 Measure. The Group consulted various interested parties including Chairs of Diocesan Houses of Clergy; attendees of a funerals conference held in July 2009; the Retired Clergy Association (represented on the Group); the Central Readers’ Council (represented on the Group); various dioceses, especially those with good practice to offer; funerals exhibition, through The Churches’ Funerals Group; fringe meeting at General Synod in July 2009 and the Weddings Project Team.

¹ The Parochial Fees and Scheduled Matters Amending Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/813).

5. In February 2011 the General Synod took note of *Parochial Fees Policy: A Report from the Archbishops' Council* (GS 1813). Paragraphs 17 to 22 of that paper set out the general principles which guided the thinking of the Working Group on parochial fees. 1. that parochial fees should be **justifiable on the basis of some relationship to actual costs incurred**, 2. that there should be **uniformity across the Church in the fees specified**, 3. that fees should be as inclusive as possible, leaving **'extras' to apply only to those items over which people have a genuine choice**, and 4. that fees should be **affordable**, also noting the clarified right to waive fees in clear cases of hardship.
6. In July 2011 the first 'new-style' draft Parochial Fees Order was laid before the General Synod for approval. **That draft Order specified that the provision of heating and the provision of a vergers or caretaker were both included in the fees prescribed for wedding and funeral services in church. The General Synod declined to approve the draft Order.** It was clear from the preceding debate that the principle reason for that outcome was that a large number of members were concerned that the inclusion of too many items within the prescribed fees – and in particular the cost of heating – made the arrangements too inflexible.
7. Accordingly, when a new draft Order was laid before the General Synod in February 2012, the cost of heating the church and the cost of providing a vergers or caretaker were removed from the matters that were included in the fees prescribed for weddings and funerals in church. The removal of those items was welcomed and the draft Order was approved.
8. The Motion seeks to reopen the debate around standardized costs for vergers and heating and suggests that a standard element for heating should be included in the statutory fee, despite the variation in size of church buildings. It notes that “those PCCs with huge buildings to heat may not like it” and suggests that the level of the PCC fee should be increased so that “on average over a year it would cover the heating costs of an average sized church where an average number of services are conducted”. The Motion argues for the deployment of a vergers as being an essential requirement for conducting a service and therefore should not constitute an “extra”.

Effect on level of fees

9. For illustrative purposes, the base fees have been re-calculated with the re-instatement of the costs of heating and vergers, as calculated at the time of the 2012 Order (Annex 1). An illustrative table of fees (Annex 2) sets out fees for 2016, were the base figures to have included these elements and uprated annually in the normal way.² Fees would be higher today, from £26 more (burial of cremated remains in churchyard) to £81 more (marriage service in a church).
10. Whilst there is evidence of “grass-roots” support in the Worcester diocese for a change in approach, the anxiety for those parishes with large and difficult to heat churches cannot be underestimated. The increases in fees will not cover the extra heating costs of some churches and there is likely to be a renewed call for some churches to be ‘special cases’ and retain a right to charge extras.

² By the 12 month to September RPI figure published in the previous year, i.e. 2016 fees were uprated by 0.8% (Sept 2015 RPI figure)

11. In respect of the employment of vergers and/or the carrying out of duties that might be carried out by a verger, we hold no data on the extent to which they are deployed, or how duties they might perform are carried out in practice.
12. We are aware that opinions vary from those who want fees to be kept as low as possible in the interests of affordability to those who want to recover the full cost of providing ministry. A scoping exercise or wider consultation in this point would be required to identify how indicative this is of the position held more widely, given that for some parishes any standardization will involve considerable levelling down of costs towards heating currently obtained as 'extras'.

Effect of increase in fee for funeral in a church

13. The level of fee for funeral service at a crematorium or a cemetery was calculated using the method recommended by the Working Group. When the Council considered the Order, before going to Synod, it decided that the total fee for funeral service in church should be reduced, re-affirming Synod's long-standing policy of keeping the fee for funeral service in church the same as for funeral service in a crematorium or cemetery.
14. The rationale was to avoid creating a situation in which the holding of a funeral service in a church is more costly than one held elsewhere. In maintaining this parity the fee for a service at the crematorium seems artificially high and the fee for a funeral service in church artificially low. On the basis of queries we receive from ministers querying the level of fees, this is not a rationale that readily understood or appreciated and was to be one of the issues to be raised in the next Fees Order.
15. The Motion, if passed, will raise the level of the fee for funeral in church, relative to the fee for funeral service in a crematorium or cemetery. Synod will need to decide whether to either, maintain the link and further artificially raise the fee for funeral service in a crematorium or cemetery, or, break the link and allow the fee for funeral at a crematorium or cemetery to drop below that for funeral service in a church.

Basis of national figure for verger and/ or heating costs

16. The Motion suggests that a national average figure be derived from the costs of heating an "average sized Church". There would be some challenges in obtaining sufficiently robust and agreed figures. A formula was used to calculate the existing fees based on cost figures derived from statistics that were available at the time. The method uses four figures: 1. CSA's cost of clergy figure (not including the cost of capital tied up in provided housing), 2. a figure for church running costs (derived from Research and Statistics Department figures published on the intranet), 3. a churchyard maintenance figure (from Research and Statistics Department figures published on the intranet), 4. a secretarial rate, for administrative staff (from an external website).
17. The Review Group intended that the method of calculation and the assumptions used to produce the fees prescribed in the Parochial Fees Order be reviewed from time to time. The current 5 year Order runs until 2019 and therefore such a review will be conducted in the lead up to the 2019 Fees Order. A decision to include vergers and/or heating costs will necessitate a thorough review of the calculation.

18. In order to provide a figure for heating, the figures for the (unapproved) draft 2011 Fees Order included figures taken from a survey of opening hours conducted in 2005 by Research and Statistics Department. An estimate of 'hours in use' was arrived at from the proportion of time that churches were unlocked and open. The survey has not been carried out since 2005 and any calculation based on data from 2005 is likely to be at best an approximation. It is not clear how the suggestion that a national average costs of "expenses" could be arrived at. Such data would fall outside of the scope of data currently obtained from parishes.

Conclusion

19. The Motion presents an opportunity for a newly elected Synod to revisit the position of, and express a view on, fees in respect of heating and the deployment of vergers. A debate on the principle of whether those costs should be set locally or nationally is welcomed at this juncture, mid-way in the current 5 year Order and will inform preparations for the 2019 Order.
20. There are practical issues around arriving at a notional figure for heating costs and the deployment of vergers (set out at paragraphs 16 to 18). There is also the matter of the effect in the relative costs of a funeral in a church or at a crematorium.
21. Should the Synod decide, in principle, that the cost of vergers and/or heating ought to be included within the statutory fees for weddings and funerals, it is recommended that any such changes should wait until the next Parochial Fees Order is due to be made in 2019 rather than by way of amending the existing 2014 Order part-way through its period of operation.

The Rt Revd David Walker, Bishop of Manchester on behalf of the
Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee
January 2016

Attachments

Annex 1: 2014 base figures – recalculated

Annex 2: Illustrative table of fees - 2016

Annex 1 - Illustrative re-calculation of base figures

2014 Fees BASE FIGURES

service for which fee payable	2012 Fees Order	Base figure for 2014 Order using 3.1% uplift on figures calculated from 2013 statistics		
	Fee set	DBF	PCC	Total
Baptism Certificate	12	0	13	13
short certificate	12	0	13	13
Publication of Banns	21	0	27	27
Banns certificate	13	0	13	13
Marriage Service	392	184	220	404
Funeral Service in church, before or after burial or cremation *	164	94	80	174
Burial in churchyard before or after service in church	269			
Burial of body in churchyard (before or after service in church)		12	266	278
Burial of cremated remains in churchyard (before or after service in church)		12	108	120
Committal at crematorium (before or after service in church)	27	25	0	25
Burial of body or burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains in cemetery (before or after service in church)	27	25	0	25
Burial of body in churchyard (sep occasion)	295	37	266	303
Burial of cremated remains in churchyard (sep occasion)	142	37	108	145
Burial of body or burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains in cemetery (separate occasion)	59	49	13	62
Service at graveside	165			
Full funeral service at graveside in churchyard, followed by burial of body		94	266	360
Full funeral service at graveside in churchyard, followed by burial of cremated remains		94	108	202
Service in crematorium or cemetery (no service in church)	164	147	27	174
Burial of body in churchyard (no service in church), not following service at graveside	295	37	266	303
Burial of cremated remains in churchyard (no service in church), not following service at graveside	142	37	108	145
burial certificate	11	0	13	13
small cross of wood	38	12	28	40
small vase/ cremation marker	64	12	54	66
any other monument	121	12	113	125
additional inscription	22	12	13	25
searches per hour	21	0	27	27
each additional certificate of an entry in a register	11	0	13	13
copies of documents under Tithe Act 1836	11	0	13	13

Extra heating	Vergers	Total Extra	Fees payable to PCC as per 2014 Order	DBF	PCC Total (incl heating & vergers)	Revised illustrative 2014 Order fees
			13	0	13	13
			13	0	13	13
			27	0	27	27
			13	0	13	13
19	58	77	220	184	297	481
11	32	43	80	94	123	217
			0		0	0
6	19	25	266	12	291	303
6	19	25	108	12	133	145
			0	0	25	25
			0	0	25	25
11	32	43	266	37	309	346
6	19	25	108	37	133	170
			0	13	49	62
			0		0	0
			0		0	0
			0	266	94	266
			0	108	94	108
0	0	0	27	147	27	174
0	32	32	266	37	298	335
0	19	19	108	37	127	164
			0	13	0	13
			0	28	12	28
			0	54	12	54
			0	113	12	113
			0	13	12	13
			0	27	0	27
			0	13	0	13
			0	13	0	13

Annex 2 - Illustrative TABLE OF PAROCHIAL FEES from 1 January 2016

Illustrative TABLE OF PAROCHIAL FEES from 1 January 2016 <i>Including additional cost of extra heating and the services of a verger</i> Note: This table sets out the fees prescribed by the Parochial Fees Order 2014 (a Statutory Instrument) and summarises other relevant information. For legal purposes reference should be made to the Order itself. There is a separate table for fees for funerals, burials, and monuments	Fee payable Towards Diocesan Board of Finance	Fee Payable To Parochial Church Council	Total Fee Payable	Increase in fee payable to Parochial Church Council	Increase in Total fee payable
BAPTISMS Certificate issued at time of baptism (See Note A1) Short certificate of baptism given under section 2, Baptismal Registers Measure 1961	- -	13.00 13.00	13.00 13.00	- -	- -
MARRIAGES Publication of banns of marriage Certificate of banns issued at time of publication Marriage Service in church	- - 189.00	27.00 13.00 306.00	27.00 13.00 496.00	- - 81.00	- - 81.00
SEARCHES IN CHURCH REGISTERS Searching registers of marriages for period before 1 July 1837 (See Note A2) (for up to one hour) for each subsequent hour or part of an hour Searching registers of baptisms (including the provision of one copy of any entry therein) for up to one hour for each subsequent hour or part of an hour Each additional copy of an entry in a register of baptism Inspection of instrument of apportionment or agreement for exchange of land for tithes deposited under the Tithe Act 1836 Furnishing copies of above (for every 72 words)	- - - - -	27.00 27.00 27.00 13.00 13.00	27.00 27.00 27.00 13.00 13.00	- - - - -	- - - - -
FUNERALS AND BURIALS OF PERSON AGED 16 YEARS OR MORE Service in Church Funeral service in church, whether taking place before or after burial or cremation (See Note B4) Burial of body in churchyard immediately preceding or following on from service in church Burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains in churchyard immediately preceding or following on from service in church Burial of body, or burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains, in cemetery immediately preceding or following on from service in church Cremation immediately preceding or following on from service in church Burial of body in churchyard on separate occasion (See Note b2(ii)) Burial of cremated remains in churchyard or other lawful disposal of cremated remains on separate occasion Burial of body, or burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains, in cemetery on separate occasion No Service in Church Funeral service (including burial of body) at graveside in churchyard Funeral service (including burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains) in churchyard Funeral service at crematorium, or funeral service (including burial of body or burial or other lawful disposal of cremated remains) in cemetery Burial of body in churchyard (committal only) Burial of cremated remains in churchyard or other lawful disposal of remains (committal only) Certificate issued at time of burial	96.00 12.00 12.00 25.00 25.00 38.00 38.00 50.00 96.00 96.00 151.00 38.00 38.00 -	127.00 300.00 137.00 - - 318.00 137.00 13.00 274.00 111.00 28.00 318.00 137.00 13.00	223.00 312.00 149.00 25.00 25.00 356.00 175.00 63.00 370.00 207.00 179.00 356.00 175.00 13.00	45.00 26.00 26.00 - - 44.00 26.00 - - - - 44.00 - -	45.00 26.00 26.00 - - 44.00 26.00 - - - - 44.00 - -