

**GENERAL SYNOD****Code of Conduct for PCCs: Response from Secretary General****Summary**

The Diocese of Chelmsford is bringing forward a Diocesan Synod Motion to ask Synod to consider a Code of Conduct for Parochial Church Councils (PCCs). The motion is seeking to set up a review to understand whether there is an appetite to introduce a Code of Conduct for PCC members so that where the behaviour of a PCC member falls short of what could reasonably be expected as acceptable, there are steps in place to address this. It is noted that a clergy member of a PCC could be subject to the Clergy Discipline process if their behaviour was seen as unacceptable but there is no such equivalent for lay PCC members. The proposed Code of Conduct would address this.

The paper from the Diocese of Chelmsford notes that PCC members are charity trustees and so are subject to the rules relating to disqualification as a trustee. These largely relate to criminal and terrorist offences and to cases where there has been a serious breach of trust. It is unlikely that the issue that this DSM seeks to address would be covered by these disqualifications and the Charity Commission is unlikely to exercise its powers of intervention in such cases. The motion therefore seeks to address what many would consider a lacuna in the relevant church legislation.

It is important to recognise, however, that the issues raised will not be straightforward to address, and any review would need to be carefully designed properly to identify the various situations that this motion seeks to address through a Code of Conduct and to make a frank assessment of what in practice could be done to address them. Such a review would have to form a view as to what appetite there is among PCCs for an enforceable Code of Conduct.

It would also need to consider what legal processes – which would have to be underpinned by new legislation – would be required to make any Code of Conduct enforceable. This would include questions about who would issue such a Code, who would consider and determine allegations that the Code had been breached, what the available penalties would be and who would impose them, what (if any) rights of appeal would be available, and how the costs of providing such a system would be met. The issue of poor behaviour from some lay members of PCCs is also the subject of the Private Members' Motion from the Ven Mark Ireland (Blackburn) which seeks to address bullying by lay officers. There would appear to be some overlap between this Diocesan Synod Motion and Archdeacon Ireland's PMM. If both motions were to be passed, the Archbishops' Council may wish to consider how work on them could be consolidated.

William Nye  
Secretary General  
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