

Parish of Speldhurst with Groombridge and Ashurst

The Parish Scheme explained

The way for a Parish consisting of more than one church to organise itself so that each church within the parish can have a considerable degree of self governance using its own Church Council (known as a "District Church Council" or DCC) is by adopting a "Scheme". Without this, the only governing body is the Parochial Church Council or PCC (we usually refer to this informally as the United Parochial Church Council or UPCC) which results in all decisions being taken centrally.

The UPCC can devolve most, but not quite all, of its powers to these DCCs and so a large measure of self governance for each of the churches follows. The main power it cannot devolve relates to certain aspects of the finance function which has to remain the preserve of the UPCC.

This Parish adopted a Scheme in 1989. By and large it has worked well until the last few years when the requirements of the churches in the Parish have evolved to the point where a new scheme was needed and this became effective towards the end of 2007.

The main points of the scheme are as follows.

1. Under the scheme each church has its own Annual Meeting of Worshippers ("AWM") which takes place in the month before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting ("APCM"), which is the meeting of the 3 congregations of the United Parish. In practice these AMWs take place in April.
2. At an AMW the following business takes place.
 - a. Deputy Churchwardens are elected. They will also serve on the UPCC.
 - b. Laity members of the DCC are elected.
 - c. Churchwardens are nominated for election at the APCM. When elected they serve on both the DCC and the UPCC.
 - d. Laity members of the UPCC are nominated for election at the APCM. They will also serve on the DCC.
 - e. Every 3 years people are nominated for election at the APCM as Deanery Synod representatives. They will also serve on the DCC. .
 - f. The Annual Report of that Church is received and discussed.
 - g. Various reports are received and discussed.
3. The Scheme allows the AWMs to decide whether Church members want their DCC members to serve for 1 or 3 years and also if, after a certain length of time, they should have a "gap year".
4. The Scheme sets out the numbers of laity to be elected to each DCC and is flexible so that these numbers can be changed in the future without having to adopt a new scheme. Also the Scheme excludes some of those who otherwise would be ex officio members of the DCCs, and this can also be changed should a church wish to do so.
5. The Scheme sets out the numbers of Deanery Synod members to be nominated by each church and again allows that these numbers can be changed relatively simply.
6. The Scheme also sets out certain other procedural and similar matters, but the above is a summary of the main provisions.

If you have any queries over the detail do contact me (on 740020). Paper or electronic copies of this explanation together with a full copy of the Scheme can be obtained from the Parish Administrator Andrea Burgess on 861187 or speldhurst.church@btopenworld.com.

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Churchwarden