

The Work of Parish Pastoral Council

“A talking shop”; “I went to the AGM this year and it doesn’t seem to have done anything”; “The Parish Council is just making our lives more difficult”; “I really do not know what the Parish Council does”. These are just some of the comments I have heard recently about the Parish Council. Do I agree? Well yes and no.

Firstly let us just look at ourselves. We have in our Parish a large Church and a Friary, part of which, thanks to the work of previous Friars and Parish Councils, is a community centre known as the Becket Centre. We have also several priests serving the Parish. But they are now ageing, many should have retired and those that are still working are increasingly frail. In this we are not unique - other parishes have the same or worse problems, so much so the Bishop is planning to partner parishes throughout the diocese. In our case the intention is to connect us to St Anne Line (S. Woodford) and Our Lady of Lourdes in Wanstead.

How are we going to manage in the future?

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) consists of about eight elected lay members, two appointed members and a secretary, plus some Friars. It is not possible for such a small number to run the parish, and nor should they. The actual work in the parish is done by small groups of fantastic people doing - usually together but sometimes alone - small tasks throughout the parish. Not a day goes past without someone cleaning, making teas, arranging flowers, fixing doors, changing lightbulbs, unblocking toilets, replacing candles and a hundred other tasks.

Teas, Cribs, Christmas Trees, Children’s services do not just happen - people make them happen.

The PPC realised some time ago that what was needed was to try and give help and support to those doing the actual work and all of us, in addition to meeting on the council, have individually been trying to work with one or more of the Parish groups.

Whist this is all crucial, we also have another role which is identifying and seeking to address missing elements of our parish life. In recent times Health and Safety, Data Protection, Youth, the storage huts, roof and heating have been occupying our attention. Unfortunately these do require debate and talking - all our best ideas usually improve by being thrown around and subject to the (often harsh) scrutiny of others – thus, yes, it is often a talking shop! But do we achieve anything? Well really I leave you to look around and answer that. You have CCTV all around the building, the Becket Centre has some new tables, chairs, new decoration and lighting plus installation of fire doors, we have a fantastic new website, Mass is now available online and a fabric group keeps the place running, all achieved in the last two years. Finance, liturgy groups and many many others are also active participants in our Parish life.

In this, we have enjoyed tremendous help and support from the Friars and from the powerhouse of the Parish - the Parish Office, led by Geraldine.

There is a huge amount more to do and both the Parish Council and most of the groups are desperately short of people volunteering to help. Please ask yourself what you could do to assist.