

**The Parish of St Gregory the Great
Preston
Parish Council - Constitution**

1. Membership

Members shall be baptised adult Catholics who are registered members of St Gregory's Parish and who participate in the life and worship of the faith community. They must be people who are available to attend a minimum of half the meetings (6 of 12) in the space of one year.

2. Selection of Members

The Parish Priest or Priest-in-Charge and the Parish Deacon will be Ex Officio members. In addition the Council will consist of nine members who shall each serve for a term of three years. There must be a minimum of one year between terms of office. Members will be selected by the parishioners of St Gregory's. Those eligible to participate in the selection process must themselves be members of the parish. Members of the Council will not be chosen to represent particular groups or interests, but the parish as a whole. The Council may invite individual people to attend any Council meeting for a specific purpose.

3. Method of Selecting the Council Members

- a. New members will be chosen by election in which all present on the occasion of the election can take part
- b. The election will be announced four weeks in advance of the election date at Masses one weekend
- c. Nomination papers will be available and will contain an explanation of the process
- d. Any member of the congregation may be nominated
- e. Each nomination requires a proposer and a seconder - the person nominated must have agreed to be so nominated
- f. Nomination papers must be returned two weeks before the election
- g. Those nominated will be named at weekend Masses one week before the election
- h. The election will be by simple majority
- i. If only the number required are nominated they will be considered elected to the Parish Council without the need for a vote
- j. The result of the election will be published at Masses the following weekend and on the Parish website

In order that a broad spectrum of the Parish might be represented on the Parish Council, only one member of any one family may serve on the Parish Council at any one time

4. Officers

There should be a Chairperson other than the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge or Parish Deacon. The Chairperson should be chosen by the Council members and serve for one year with the option for a second consecutive year. The Chairperson will prepare the agenda in consultation with the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge and will facilitate the meetings of the Council.

There should be a Secretary who is not a member of the Council. The Secretary should be appointed for an agreed term of office, but for not more than three years at a time. The Secretary will circulate

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to the members the agenda for meetings prepared by the Chairperson and the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge; keep minutes of meetings and circulate them to the members; make available to parishioners a summary of meetings; and deal with any correspondence that relates to the Parish Council.

5. The Responsibilities of all Members

Members of the Council will be expected to

- attend regular meetings of the Parish Council
- participate in all discussions during meetings
- assist where possible with the implementation of decisions taken by the Council
- endeavour to grow in the knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the Parish
- participate in training and formation that may be offered

6. Frequency of Meetings

Meetings will take place monthly. Extra meetings may be held as the need arises. There will be a summer break agreed by the members.

7. Prayer and Presence

Each meeting will begin with a time of “Prayer and Presence”. This should be a substantial block of time – up to 30 minutes. It is formative and has a bearing on what will happen during the meeting. Most usually this time should include a period of silence, perhaps some quiet music to help people become still, a time of sharing – ‘how are you as you come to the meeting/what would you like the group to know about you right now’ – a piece of Scripture, some prayer which may be in silence, or involve informal sharing of prayer or a prayer spoken by one.

8. Decision making

Collaboration between the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge and the Parish Council is integral to each stage of the parish decision-making process.

The Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge presides over and ratifies all stages of the process including final choices and implementations. This respects the authority of the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge and the integrity, expertise and deliberations of the members of the Council. Above all, the Gospel mandate of mutual love, listening and understanding should prevail amongst the members of the Council. Decision-making will be by consensus. Consensus exists within a group when each member of the group can say:

- **I have had the opportunity to voice my opinions.**
- **I believe the group has heard me.**

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- **I can actively support the group's decision as the best possible at this time, even if it is not my first choice.**

When it comes to agreeing on a decision, each member of the group should be asked if they can make these three statements. If each answers "yes", consensus exists and the group can move on. It isn't easy to meet this test. Discipline and attention are necessary and are demanding.

Consensus decision-making requires:

- **Sufficient time to explore all the information and opinions.**
- **Strong facilitative leadership.**
- **Members willing to contribute their views and discuss their reasons.**
- **Commitment and effort to develop an atmosphere of honesty and openness in the group.**
- **Willingness to confront and resolve controversy and conflict.**

If there is an impasse and it is judged both that a decision has to be taken urgently and a consensus decision cannot be reached, the decision in question will be taken by the Parish priest/Priest-in-Charge. However, every effort must be made to reach consensus.

9. The Agenda

The Agenda should be circulated to the members not less than 5 days before each meeting. Minutes of meetings should be circulated to members within 14 days of each meeting.

10. Quorum

A Quorum shall be a total of 6 plus the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge. A Quorum of 7 can legitimately meet without the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge, but only with his agreement.

16/01/14