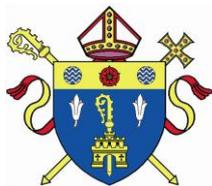


DIOCESE OF LANCASTER



TRUSTEE POLICY ON PROPOSALS TO PROVIDE FOR NEW/RE-CREATED PARISH HALL FACILITIES

March 2015

CONTEXT

An appropriately-sized and suitably resourced parish hall *can* make a significant difference to the quality of community activities and life of a parish. Without an appropriate-sized separate place for parishioners to gather and meet for social and catechetical events, people's experience of the Church can simply be little more than a Mass centre.

Parish halls *can* also help to extend the Church's mission more broadly if used by the wider community since they *can* promote the Catholic Church as making a positive contribution to a local community so as to be seen as a force for good. Time unused by parish, with the right leadership, organisation and sense of responsibility, can be let externally to produce an often valuable source of income. In this case the advice on Hall Letting received from CCIA should be followed.

There are also, of course, a small number of halls in our Diocese which are not being used effectively and hence drain parish resources and energy for little or no benefit. It should be noted from this experience that the provision of a hall building (or internal gathering space), together with its management, maintenance and running costs, is a significant outgoing and responsibility for any parish.

The Trustee's official policy criteria to be considered *and* evidenced by all and any Parish(es) when making an application to the trustees for the modification of an existing building as a new or enhanced gathering space *or* the construction of a new building for such use are as follows:

POLICIES:

1. Sustainability

The '*Fit for Mission?*' survey should be consulted as well as the current demographics of the area and parish, the age-profile of the congregation, level of activities, state of the current parish properties, finances and the proximity of an alternative appropriate gathering space in another Catholic parish. Parishes should provide written responses with their application indicating that all these points have been addressed.

The Trustees and Property Office/Committee will also seek a 'pastoral steer' from the Bishop's Office for each application in this regard.

2. Current and future suitability.

Parishes should provide written evidence that the size and design of the proposed hall is appropriate given the parish's present and future needs. Current and aspired-to parish activities should be examined to ensure that beneficial usage exists and further usage can be developed following the creation of the facility. Uses should be listed and analysed to ensure that they

will be ongoing *and* significantly add to the value of parish life in return for the outlay and ongoing cost. Justification for the location of the new hall in relation to the other existing parish buildings should be provided *i.e.* is the proposed facility too far from the church? Please also address security requirements, particularly if the building is remote from other parish buildings.

3. Management - Construction and Ongoing

Details of how the project is to be managed from inception through to completion should be provided with the trustee application, care should be taken to ensure there are sufficient willing, able and reliable parishioners to help and advise the Parish Priest with the planning of the hall in all its stages.

Proposals for the ongoing management of the hall, once built, should be included with the trustee application, assurances that there are parishioners or a proposed structure to take care of bookings, cleaning, security and all the other day to day aspects should be provided. Assurances should also be given that there are younger people within the parish to take over these roles as people grow older

N.B. There should not be an over-reliance on the role of the Parish Priest/Priest in Charge in the project.

4. Affordability

A cost plan should be submitted with any application demonstrating affordability - both for the initial creation of the facility *and* for the foreseeable future. For initial creation, parishes are reminded that under the established diocesan rule (contained within the Parish Property Management Guide), Parish Halls are *category three* - calling for the initial finance to consist of 75% new money.

Budgets should be created for ongoing/running costs including items such as heat, light, wear and tear on furniture & fittings, etc, future maintenance can then be analysed against projected future parish income to produce a business plan.

Whilst parish halls can provide excellent community and pastoral benefit the financial return from renting the unused time *can* be minimal.

5. Value of Real Estate

As always with any developments carried out on diocesan land the effect of the development on the long-term future value of the real estate should be carefully considered and specific advice sought from the Property Office.

6. Conversion of existing buildings.

Conversion of existing buildings to create meeting spaces is generally cheaper than new-build but it can have pastoral implications, particularly the opening up of the ground floor of presbyteries to create meeting spaces. However, it can be wasteful not to utilise the ground floor of a presbytery, it may be that the upstairs area is suitable to be converted for clergy or other religious personnel to occupy, but conversion of a building in this way may preclude other future uses. If restoration of the presbytery to its original state may be deemed necessary in future, this could be costly. If this approach is to be proposed, advice should be sought from the Bishop's Office in the first instance before preparing the Trustee application. The Trustee application should include a justification statement covering these concerns.

7. Alternatives

The presence/use of other meeting spaces in the locality should be considered. A statement giving details of alternative local facilities (if any) with costs should be included with the application. It may be possible and economically more advantageous for some parishes, to rent a facility locally rather than pay for their own facility which may well be underused. The presence of other facilities should also be considered when assessing the possibility of renting.

PROCESS:

Once full consideration has been given to the above aspects by the Parish and evidenced, the Parish Priest or Priest in Charge would make an initial application 'to explore' to the Diocesan Trustees using the appropriate application form and taking advice from the Property Office as necessary.

The formal application from the Parish to the Trustees should include:

- a)** Sketch plans of the general arrangement of the Hall/meeting space together with
- b)** A budget costing including fees, VAT, fitting out and furnishing. Both plans and budget should be the result of advice from a qualified building professional.
- c) N.B.** The application should include a narrative responding to all of the **7** points listed above.

To be reviewed by Trustees in March 2016.