



Property Information & Advice for Parishes

A PARISH, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE SHOULD MANAGE ITS OWN AFFAIRS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARISH PRIEST. By virtue of the authority vested in the Parish Priest by the Code of Canon Law (Can. 1279 §1) administration of the parish rests with him. Canon Law distinguishes between ordinary (Can. 1281 §1) and extraordinary (Can. 1281 §2) acts of administration.

Property Maintenance of Churches, Halls and Presbyteries

Proposals for works to any parish property should originate in the parish and not in the Diocese or any Diocesan committee. However, advice should always be sought from the Property Department (Central Diocesan Services) before embarking on significant works or on technical matters e.g. Boiler or heating system replacement, electrical rewiring or plumbing systems in the Church.

Permission is not required for routine maintenance and repair work costing less than £10,000 so long as it does not involve structural alterations or a material change in the Church. Material changes include a changes of colour scheme and lighting.

The Diocese has a formal procedure for dealing with works costing in excess of £10,000 including the VAT. It should be understood by parishes that this is to allow a measure of precautionary review and a sharing of experience and best practice. It also ensures that all legal requirements are complied with and that the Trustees are fully advised of any major spending within the Diocese.

Thresholds for referral to the Property Department (Central Diocesan Services) or Finance Committee includes the VAT on the total project cost.

- Up to £10,000 (Parish Priest approval required)
- £10,000 - £19,999 (Finance Office approval required)
- £20,000 & above (Finance Committee approval required)

The above thresholds must be complied with in all cases and Parishes should note that any failure to advise the Property Department of projects they are undertaking, may compromise its successful outcome due to a lack of professional input and advice throughout the process.

Referral to the Archbishop

Once the Finance Committee have approved a proposal and the Art & Architecture Committee & Southern Historic Churches have approved (if applicable), major schemes are put before the Archbishop by the Financial Secretary for his review and final approval.

The advice and approval of the Property Department (Central Diocesan Services) should be sought before:

- The employment of an architect or surveyor for works to any Parish property
- Major works including extensions to existing property, new buildings, refurbishments e.g. window replacement, roof replacement or below ground drainage works etc.
- Negotiations are commenced on disposal or acquisition of Parish land or buildings
- The acquisition of items of permanent, fixed furniture in the Church
- The sale or disposal of items of value from the church
- All works to Listed buildings
- All works to Church organs

Additionally

All changes to the Church e.g. liturgical re-ordering, church lighting, structural alterations, heating, redecoration schemes, change of design of windows and renewal of permanent fixtures and fittings (e.g. altars, ambo, etc.) should be submitted to the Diocesan Art & Architecture Committee.

The proposal including a description, plans or drawings of the project, must be submitted to the Chair of that Committee Canon John Weatherill at johnweatherill@rcaos.org.uk or if advice is needed prior to project submission, telephone 020 8660 3815 to discuss with Canon John directly.

Disposal or Purchase of Property

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark CIO as a registered charity, has all of its physical assets vested in the Trustees of the charity.

Therefore, to comply with charity legislation, all property disposals or purchases must be submitted to the Property Department (Diocesan Central Services) for review and then onto the Finance Committee for approval, before submission to the Trustees for final sanction. Only by following this procedure can property assets be transferred appropriately and in full legal compliance.

Parish Projects

Immediately following Parish deliberations regarding a proposed project, the **Area Bishop** and the **Property Department (Diocesan Central Services)** should be consulted in conjunction with an architect / building surveyor, who will advise on planning and building regulation applications. The Finance Office can advise about the feasible financing of the work, various other permissions that may be needed and correct procedure.

For all changes to a church or chapel and for all repair and maintenance projects over £10,000, please submit the eventual proposals and plans via the parish project application form (available from the property department) to the Finance Office for approval. Please note that **the Finance Committee** will need to approve projects over £20,000. Where the Art & Architecture Committee has to consider the proposals, the Finance Committee will only consider them **after** the Art & Architecture Committee has made its recommendation. Both Committees will then make their recommendation to **the Archbishop**.

In addition, for **Listed Buildings** (and property in a Conservation Area), projects will need to be considered by the **Historic Churches Committee** in accordance with statutory requirements and, if approved, a Faculty issued. If proper permissions are not obtained before work is started, the parish may be required by the authorities to take the work down and reinstate the original building. This could be at the expense of the Parish or even the person who has undertaken the work.

For churches with Listed Building status, the parish should commission from a suitable surveyor or architect a Quinquennial Report every five years.

Halls and Presbytery

The permission of the Archbishop is required, as above, for the appointment of an **architect** or **surveyor** for the building of a new hall and also for any extensions, structural alterations or major repairs and renewals to presbyteries (see **ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT** below).

As a general rule, you should use the services of an architect and/or building surveyor for any major projects and particularly for any works that involve structural alterations. The Finance Office can give advice on the choice of these firms and must approve the firm finally chosen so that we can share and benefit from experience around the Diocese and in order to ensure that the work is undertaken competently.

Any major project should have staged payments and payment should be made only against certification of the work by the architect / project manager.

Disabled Access

In all the above deliberations access for the disabled to parish buildings and to the life and worship of the parish should always be a major consideration. In this way a parish will keep to the spirit of the Gospel and the letter of the law.

Lack of financial resources in a parish, or inability to raise sufficient funds for a project to improve access for the disabled, should not preclude some consideration being given to this matter in discussion with our Health & Safety advisers and with the Diocesan Finance Office about means of assisting such a project from central funds or with support from other parishes.

Insurance

Catholic Insurance Services Ltd (CIS) is the current provider for the majority of Parishes and policy details and guidance on submitting claims can be found within the policy handbook. If the Parish do not hold a copy of the policy on file, please contact the property department who can supply the necessary document and advice if required.

Before submission of a claim, please ensure that you have collected full details about your claim, such as:

- Description of incident including what has happened, time & date and any emergency repairs carried out
- Supporting documents (if any) emails, letters from interested parties i.e. neighbours etc
- Photographs of damage (if safe to do so)

The more information that you can give will help with the response from CIS who will in the majority of claims move swiftly onto appointing an independent loss adjuster.

The loss adjuster will be an experienced surveyor/engineer who will (by arrangement) visit your Parish and inspect the damage reported.

Following review of the report, CIS will contact you and specify if your claim has been successful and what the next stage of the process is to be.

Asbestos Management & Audits

In compliance with latest legislation and to protect every user of parish property a survey (Type 2) of all parishes was undertaken in 2004/5 on the Diocese's behalf and at the cost of the Diocese by BES Consulting. The few major problem areas that were identified were immediately remedied.

Reports were issued to each Parish for their records and to ensure that annual inspections are undertaken on the condition of any existing ACM (Asbestos Containing Material) highlighted within the report. The property department can provide advice and assistance on asbestos matters and you should contact them directly should you have any issue or are planning any works in or around an area of known or suspected asbestos. All contractors employed to work on or in the Parish estate and properties must be shown the BES report. This is so that they can plan their works or operation to be undertaken safely and with minimum risk to themselves or any others who may be affected.

A copy of your Parish BES Asbestos Report can be provided upon request by the Property Department (Diocesan Central Services).

Contact Details

Property Department
Diocesan Central Services
Bowen House
59 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JE

Tel: 020 7960 2500

Email: property@rcaos.org.uk

