



Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 January 2023 at 7.30pm

Present:

Tony Rindl (TR) - Chair
Peter Dean (PD) – Churchwarden
Roger Courtney (RC)
Tilly Elliott (TE)
Lesley Gray (LG)
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)
Cathy Honeyman (CH)
Dave King (DK)
Eileen Roby (ER)
Gill Watson (GW)
Abi Idris (AI) – via Zoom from around 8pm
Marcus Jones (MJ) - PCC Secretary

1. Opening Prayer

ER opened the meeting with a reading from James 3.17-18 and a prayer.

2. Apologies for absence

None were received.

3. Conflict of Interest

None declared.

4. Approval of the Minutes of 21 November 2022

4.1 PD called for a change to section 6.5. He expressed concern that this had been altered from the first draft without checking with him. MJ apologised and said that he was very happy to receive amendment requests even after the second draft had been circulated to the Council for the forthcoming meeting and would have done so in this case had PD drawn the matter to his attention. PD indicated that he preferred the original wording. Others commented that the change was not substantive being essentially the deletion of the action point in the second draft, which was correct. PD accepted that there may not have been a specific action and agreed to that deletion. However, he considered that the Council could be criticised by the Independent Examiner for not taking the opportunity to have a valuation of what was an investment property.

4.2 TR supported PD's concerns, saying that in his view it was a dangerous practice to allow a third party to amend someone's words. He added that Council business should not be conducted outside meetings, although some members expressed their reservations about that. TR considered that the proper procedure for minutes should be that the Secretary writes up a draft after the meeting, circulates it for the next meeting and that any amendments should be discussed and agreed then. It was pointed out that there were good reasons for the minutes to be sent round quickly for comment while memories were fresh: they could fade, especially over holiday and other breaks when the Council did not meet. Moreover, a different procedure for minutes had been agreed unanimously at the November meeting (see section 4.2 of the minutes of 21 November 2022).

4.3 TR proposed that his suggested procedure be adopted and was seconded by PD. There were three votes in favour, two abstentions and six against. (AI was not present for this vote). Consequently, this was not approved.

4.4 An alternative was suggested by way of compromise. A first draft would be written and sent out seven days after the meeting. Members would send any amendments to the Secretary shortly thereafter. The Secretary would send out the unamended draft prior to the meeting with a list of the amendments received for discussion at the meeting. MJ had reservations about such an approach.

4.5 PD then stated that he was concerned that he and TR had not had any input to the agenda. MJ replied that soon after taking up his role as Secretary, he had offered to meet with TR before each meeting to discuss the agenda and remained happy to do so. There was also an opportunity for Council members, including TR and PD, to have input when he circulated a draft agenda ten days before the meeting.

4.6 Subject to PD and MJ finalising wording for section 6.5, the Council approved the minutes.

5. Matters arising

(i) Christmas Flowers Budget

5.1 TE expressed her thanks to those members of the congregation who had given generously for the purchase of flowers for Christmas. Indeed, there was a surplus of £15 which would be put to flowers for Easter.

(ii) Groups using church facilities: communication

5.2 TR reported that he and the staff team were still looking into what other churches have on their websites that would facilitate better communication between church users, including wider access to the Church Diary. In the meantime, the best approach on a Thursday afternoon was for the doors between the church and Centre to be locked while Thursday Group met and, if necessary, for TE to have a key.

(iii) *Car Parking*

5.3 TE said that she had not yet spoken with Mayor Peter Taylor and would be away for two months. She would follow this up and report back to the PCC in due course.

(iv) *Card reader*

5.4 It was clarified that St Mary's needed only a static card reader for donations.

ACTION: TR and PD to look into this further.

(v) *Annual Statistics for Mission*

5.5 TR reported that the Annual Statistics for Mission for the Diocese would be completed by the end of January.

(vi) *Defibrillator*

5.6 The defibrillator had been installed in the lobby between the church and Centre.

6. Correspondence

6.1 See section 10 below.

7. Safeguarding

7.1 LG updated the Council on safeguarding issues. She had set up a Safeguarding Folder and advised that Sunday School should have a separate such folder. She asked all Council members to sign that they had read Section 7 of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook. It was also agreed that members should sign the other safeguarding related policies. LG considered that more information on safeguarding and domestic abuse should be available on the St Mary's website but she would put more concrete proposals to the Council in due course.

ACTION: LG to arrange for members to sign the Handbook at the next meeting.

7.2 LG said she was still awaiting a list of all church activities for completion of the Parish Dashboard. This needed to be done in time for the APCM.

ACTION: TR and PD to advise LG about church activities for Parish Dashboard

7.3 LG advised that Jacky Faria (JF) had sent her a working document listing who had completed DBS training and who had offered referees for references. LG quoted an email from JF stating that, due to a reduction in JF's hours, JF would no longer be assisting with such safeguarding administration but could continue to help with DBS applications. LG explained that upon agreeing to the role, she was advised by TR and the Children's & Families Worker that she would not be required to carry out the administration, which would be undertaken by the office staff. LG felt she was unable to take on that role herself as it would be a huge task which would be unmanageable with her other commitments. TR said he would speak to the office staff to see what could be done, but that LG should accept that changes to staff's office hours could not be predicted and might therefore have an

impact on her role. LG said that she had her own commitments and, as a volunteer, could not absorb shortfalls in staff's office hours. MG said she knew someone who might be prepared to assist and would speak with TR about this.

8. GDPR

8.1 MJ said that the breach that had occurred in 2020 in connection with arranging the trip to Israel, which had been complained about by Person A, had been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). He had advised Person A accordingly at their December meeting. The ICO had advised they would be taking no further action but included links to further information and guidance that staff should be aware of.

ACTION: TR and PD to ensure staff are aware of the ICO's information and guidance.

8.2 PD advised that the breach that had occurred in November had also been reported to the ICO. As the information was forwarded only to Council members who were trustees, the ICO considered this was not a matter of concern and would take no further action.

9. Committee reports

a. Finance

(i) Financial Report

9.1 TR referred first to the meeting of the Emergency Finance Committee (EFC) on 1 December, a summary of which had been sent to the Council. There had been some progress in appointing JF as bank signatory. In response to our letter requesting assistance from the Diocese, Colin Bird, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance would meet with TR, PD, MJ, Anniefrida Kadzura (AK), JF and Helen Baldwin (HB) on 16 January to see what help might be offered. The re-instated Finance Committee (FC) had met for the first time on 5 January and had functioned well as a team. The Council expressed its thanks to Charlie Luckhurst for writing the minutes and sending them to MJ early the next day in good time for this meeting of the Council.

9.2 ER asked why MJ and RC had not attended the EFC until part of the way through. The Vicar said that he had had to take a pragmatic decision to ensure that the meeting could function and achieve its purpose. Supporting TR, MJ added that while this was not ideal in his view, it had been necessary. However, he considered that this must be an exception and that it was important that the Council's will should be followed as expressed. The Church Representation Rules were clear that the Council took decisions and not the sub-committees that it appointed, which was essentially what had occurred.

9.3 GW said that concerns about communication between the Council and its sub-committees had been raised at FC and asked that this be added to the next Council agenda. An initial view was that PCC members who were part of each sub-committee should be responsible for communicating any relevant decisions, information etc to their sub-committee.

ACTION: MJ to add *Communication* to the next PCC agenda.

9.4 PD referred to the Financial Report up to 31 August, put together by Richard Watson the previous afternoon based on figures provided by AK, for which the Council expressed its thanks.

9.5 It was noted that the Report did not include figures for the Israel trips and that the Council had previously agreed these should be included. TR said he needed to speak to HB about this.

ACTION: TR and PD to ensure inclusion of Israel figures on the next report.

9.6 PD observed that the Report showed an increase in lettings of 252% which was welcome, although he recognised that planned giving was only at 81% of what had been forecast by 31 August while expenditure was at 90%. Answering questions, PD said he did not know exactly what the grant of £6,400 related to, but it was likely to be a single specific grant. The reduction in the Parish Share would not take effect until 2023. PD informed the Council that the level of reserve that complied with the PCC's policy was now £40,000.

9.7 Some members noted that the impact of the appeal would not be evident until later in the year. Other members considered there was no overall encouragement in the figures and indeed, serious cause for concern. The forecast deficit at 31 August was very significant at over £24,000 but was apparently exceeded, with a third of the year's figures yet to come. The expenditure on utilities was up at 149% of forecast with further rises to come in the autumn figures. We should not be relying on lettings as the key source of funding. Overall, our financial situation was fundamentally the same and we were not well placed to take decisions. RC said that he, TE and MJ would put their *Expenditure* paper forward for discussion once there was a fuller picture.

(ii) Budget

9.8 TR said that normally the Budget process would begin in September for the following year i.e. in September 2022 for 2023. At present we had available only figures up to 31 August and should seek advice from Colin Bird on the budgetary process for this year. In answer to a question, it was confirmed that in most cases budget holders were asked to put forward the budgets they considered they required in the first instance; and that they should now be asked to do so.

ACTION: PD to ensure that Finance Committee begins the budget process.

(iii) Israel Update

9.9 RC informed the Council that he and MJ had met with Person A in December to listen to their concerns. The report of the meeting placed before the PCC set these out in some detail, including Person A's recommendations. Person A had approved the final draft of their account. RC said that the previous trips, in 2015 and 2018, had gone well but Covid had exposed aspects of their arrangements that were not clear. In the Archdeacon's report of June 2021, seen by Person A, the Archdeacon had invited the Council to review its procedures in connection with these arrangements. RC reminded the Council that in July it approved a resolution that "any use of its accounts for future pilgrimages must be explicitly approved" (Resolution I). He and MJ considered that in line with the Archdeacon's

invitation and to address the issues arising from the arrangements of the trip, the Council needed to expand on this resolution.

9.10 Accordingly, RC proposed and MJ seconded the following:

Resolution 2

In the event of a future request for the PCC bank account or any other aspect of the PCC's activities to be used in connection with a pilgrimage:

- (i) The PCC must receive full details of the organisations that will be involved in the use of the funds and how pilgrims' funds will be protected in the event of any failure of these organisations or other unforeseen events.
- (ii) The PCC will seek legal advice on its legal status in relation to the pilgrimage and the consequent responsibilities.
- (iii) The PCC will require similar information on status and responsibilities to be provided by whoever is promoting the pilgrimage.

Resolution 3

Monthly financial reports to the PCC, and the Annual Accounts of the PCC, should include information on all categories of income and expenditure which have involved PCC Accounts.

Resolution 4

All expenditures from PCC funds must be authorised by the Council, through budget allocations or through explicit resolution.

Resolution 5

Information and documentation received that is relevant to PCC interests should be made available to the PCC promptly and fully.

These were discussed and some members considered that in Resolution 3, the phrase, "and the Annual Accounts of the PCC" should be deleted because such Accounts were prepared according to certain protocols and it might not be possible to include all the financial information in them in the way suggested by RC and MJ. Subject to that amendment, the Council approved the resolutions with two abstentions (PD, DK). As an interested party, TR did not participate.

9.11 RC said that these resolutions should be translated in broader terms into a financial policy and he and MJ had therefore drafted *The Use of PCC Bank Accounts*. It was agreed that PD would consider this and consult with the Finance Committee prior to further discussion at the next Council meeting.

b. Buildings

9.12 RC introduced his written report, noting that he was awaiting quotes for a modification to the AV desk and for a replacement valve for the heating system.

9.13 RC explained he had received a revised quote for the floodlights which, owing to rising prices, was higher than the original quote. There was now a shortfall of £3,450 between the grants from Watford Borough Council and BID and the revised quote. The Pre-School had said it would contribute and he asked if the extra contribution required could be discussed urgently since we needed to utilise the grants. MG indicated that she was content in principle to agree the contribution on behalf of the Pre-School Committee but would consult and report back to RC.

ACTION: MG to confirm to RC that Pre-School is willing to make up the revised shortfall.

9.14 RC reported that the quinquennial inspection had taken place and he was not aware that any significant defects had been found. He thought that the architect would say that we needed to establish regular professional testing of emergency lighting. The architect had remarked that the roofs were in good order.

9.15 RC was expecting to receive a proposal for a PV array at the church. This stemmed from a conversation at the launch of Watford Borough Council's sustainability strategy, which he had attended. The firm that the council used for insulation and PV installations had visited the church and would be submitting the proposal.

c. Pre-School

9.16 MG presented the Pre-School Committee's (the Committee) report to the Council. A new staff member had been appointed. Still to be resolved was the matter of making the garden more secure (see section 9.25 of the minutes of 21 November 2022). Watford Borough Council had indicated to RC that it had no objections of principle to the hedge being taller but the Committee had yet to decide on a proposal for an interim solution (e.g. internal willow screening, higher fence). Some doubt was expressed about whether the hedge would in fact grow suitably if left uncut.

ACTION: MG to liaise/follow up with the Pre-school staff/Committee to make a decision about what is required and report back to the Council

d. Climate Emergency Committee

9.17 RC reported that a meeting had taken place on 24 November.

e. Missions Committee

9.18 There was nothing to report.

10. Audio-visual representations

10.1 MJ said he had met with Leah Watson (LW) at her request and had written a short report setting out her practical concerns received about the operation of the new AV system and the future of ZoomChurch. He had also received correspondence from Andy Roby (AR) about the future of ZoomChurch.

10.2 The Council discussed the issues raised by LW and AR. Training would be provided by the contractor after installation of the system and would be given to a broad group of church members. The new system could operate both Zoom and livestreaming and would be an enhancement of what can be provided currently. We would address the detailed operation of the system around the time of installation once a date had been agreed, which was likely to be in three or four months' time.

10.3 There was a short debate comparing the advantages and disadvantages of Zoom with livestreaming. Several of the Council inclined towards retaining Zoom because it provided a live, interactive service for the elderly and sick who could not get to church. Others preferred livestreaming services. However, ZoomChurch would continue for the time being. A fuller debate would need to take place in due course which should take place within the context of our overall vision for St Mary's e.g. evangelism.

10.4 The Council expressed its thanks to LW and AR for their informative and helpful representations.

ACTION:

1. RC to advise MJ when an AV installation date is arranged so that a discussion can be a listed.
2. MJ to reply to LW and AR.

11. Policies

a. Policies for Review in 2023

11.1 MJ explained that the Recruitment Policy had been due for review in May 2021 and along with the Video Conferencing policy would be dealt with later in the agenda. The Bullying Policy and Conflict of Interest policy were due for review in October.

b. Recruitment

11.2 MJ explained he had made a number of changes mostly to section 3.1 of the policy. He had clarified the first bullet to ensure a proper case is made to the Council for any new member of staff to be employed. He had deleted references to the now defunct Staff Committee. It was agreed that in bullet 7 of section 3.2 and in section 3.2 that the Staff Committee's responsibilities should now fall to Standing Committee. These changes to the policy were proposed by MJ, seconded by PD and approved unanimously.

ACTION: MJ to update policy and arrange for its inclusion in the Church Policy Folder.

c. Livestreaming

11.3 LG presented a draft of a new Livestreaming Policy, pointing out that this addressed some of the concerns raised by LW (see section 10 above). The Council discussed the policy, especially issues around consent. LG undertook to update the policy which would remain in draft. It would be adopted if and when weekly livestreaming of services began.

ACTION: LG to update draft policy and bring forward for adoption as required.

d. Video Conferencing

11.4 LG said that that this policy had been adopted during the pandemic when Zooming began at St Mary's and required updating to reflect the present situation, including listing LG as Safeguarding Officer. It was observed this should be circulated to Connect Group Leaders, several of whom use Zoom for their meetings. The Policy was proposed by LG, seconded by TE and approved unanimously by the Council.

ACTION: MJ to circulate policy to Connect Group Leaders

12. PCC membership

12.1 MJ reported that he had spoken with AI who had explained her personal circumstances and, at her request, he had asked PD to set up a link so that she could attend. The Council welcomed her back.

12.2 TR noted that the 2023 APCM was approaching and he asked members to be active in recruiting new PCC members. MJ considered that it would be helpful to explain to the congregation in a short talk at one or more services about what PCC did and what responsibilities PCC members had. TR agreed and added that an article would also be helpful. MJ said he would consider if he could do this, but much would depend on his available time.

12.3 TR observed there was a need to work on improving meetings and also to discuss roles and responsibilities.

13. Churches Together in Watford (CTW)

13.1 TR reported that St Mary's was hosting a CTW service on 22 January at 5.30pm and encouraged members to attend.

13.2 TR expressed his thanks to Brian and Jackie Mee for acting as CTW representatives and explained the CTW Snapshot Scheme and response sheet that had been completed to indicate St Mary's participation and relevant contact details etc. The Council agreed that St Mary's should participate in this Scheme.

ACTION: MJ to return response sheet to the Mees.

14. Vicar's Report

14.1 TR highlighted the various special services that had taken place since the last meeting of the Council. The services included the funeral services of Brian Rew and Ian Peck, the Memorial Service for the Hospital Chaplaincy, and the Worship For All, Advent and Christmas services. In particular, TR thanked TE for arranging the Christmas flowers. He said that as numbers at the Midnight Communion service were fairly low at around 20-25, he was considering moving it to an earlier time in future.

14.2 TR also reported that visits to St Mary's from local schools, including Chessbrook and Chater's, had taken place; and noted some events in which he had participated, including the installation of Rev. Deborah Snowball at All Saints, South Oxhey and the Watford Rotary Christmas Lunch.

14.3 Lastly, TR said that Luther Blissett was re-establishing the Watford Branch of the Royal British Legion which had been closed in 1930 and he considered this was something St Mary's should support. The Council responded that it was very keen to do so.

15. Health & Safety (H&S)

15.1 LG said that following some recent incidents, it was clear that a H&S Committee was needed. PD added that a H&S Officer was also needed to ensure there was a single point of contact and that the Officer's name was shown on a prominently displayed notice(s). LG said that Anthony Gray had offered to set up a H&S Committee. This offer was accepted by the Council.

16. Any other business

None.

17. Date of next meeting

17.1 The next Council meeting will take place at 7.30pm on 13 February 2023 in the Church Centre.

The meeting closed at 10.50pm with the *Living God's Love* prayer.

Marcus Jones
PCC Secretary