



Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 March 2023 at 7.30pm

Present:

Rev. Tony Rindl (TR) - Chair
Peter Dean (PD) – Churchwarden, Vice Chair
Roger Courtney (RC)
Tilly Elliott (TE)
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)
Cathy Honeyman (CH)
Dave King (DK)
Eileen Roby (ER)
Gill Watson (GW)
Marcus Jones (MJ) - PCC Secretary

1. Opening Prayer

RC opened the meeting with a reading from Luke 22.24-27. He shared some thoughts from that passage about the nature of leadership and prayed for the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Lesley Gray (LG).

3. Conflict of Interest

TR reminded the Council that he was a trustee of the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership (WTRRP) and the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy.

4. Approval of the Minutes of 27 February 2023

4.1 MJ reported that an action point needed to be added to section 10.8 and this was agreed.

4.2 RC proposed that the minutes be accepted. This was seconded by CH and approved unanimously by the Council.

5. Meeting with Archdeacon: Report

5.1 The Council received the report of the meeting TR, PD and MJ had had with the Ven. Janet Mackenzie, Archdeacon of Hertford on 15 March about best practice in Council. TR considered this had been fruitful. He said he wished to withdraw a certain statement he had made about the minutes during the meeting of 9 January and recognised that MJ had involved him in the setting of agendas. MJ agreed that the meeting had been helpful and thanked TR for his remarks. He reminded the Council of the characteristics of a healthy Christian culture set out in the July 2022 edition of the Diocesan Safeguarding Newsletter and encouraged all Council members to actively foster this. In his view this was essential to enable the recruitment and retention of volunteers for the Council's offices.

6. Matters arising

(i) *Groups using church facilities: communication*

6.1 TR circulated a specimen planner prepared by Liz Allan (LA) showing the bookings of church rooms each day for April 2023. This was intended as an internal document so that Council members could see which rooms were in use and when. He emphasised that it was advisable to consult with LA about availability even in cases where the room in question was booked because it was usually possible to re-arrange bookings. The form would be made available to the Council in the on-line PCC Folder. The Council agreed that the planner was a helpful means of communication.

(ii) *Purchase of card reader*

6.2 TR reported that he had contacted Kate Ford, the Diocesan Giving Adviser, to arrange an initial discussion about introducing card readers to St Mary's. She would then visit to demonstrate two prototypes following which the Council could make a decision about which was best for our purposes.

Action: TR to report back to Council.

(iii) *Annual Statistics for Mission*

6.3 TR reported these had been sent to the Diocese.

7. Correspondence

7.1 MJ said that he had received an enquiry from someone affiliated to St Mary's about TR's views on *Living in Love and Faith* and had sent them a link to TR's article in the February edition of St Mary's News.

7.2 MJ also reported that he had received from Brian Mee information about forthcoming events arranged by Churches Together in Watford (CTW). He undertook to circulate this to Council members and to ask Pam Rastall (PR) to include it in the Mailchimp.

Action: MJ to circulate CTW information to Council members and PR.

8. Safeguarding

8.1 There was nothing to report in LG's absence.

9. GDPR

9.1 There was nothing to report.

10. Committee reports

a. Finance

(i) Filing of accounts

10.1 PD confirmed that the 2021 accounts had been filed with the Charity Commission on 15 March. It was observed that the Council had not been advised that these were overdue until Colin Bird, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, pointed this out during the meeting on 16 January. Similarly, the Council had not been advised that the 2020 accounts had been filed on 11 June 2022, 223 days late. PD was asked to ensure that any reminders issued by the Commission were forwarded to the Secretary for circulation to the Council.

Action: PD to forward any reminders issued by the Charity Commission to the Secretary.

(ii) Finance Report

10.2 The Council *noted* the report of the meetings of Finance Committee (FinCom) on 2 and 23 March. Jacky Faria (JF) had received the records for 2022 and estimated that she could complete them up to 31 December by 21 April. She had updated the records to 30 September and the Council noted the Finance Report based upon this.

10.3 Referring to that Report, PD expressed caution about the figure for planned giving, which remained low. There was no evidence that giving had actually reduced and Gift Aid, which should be in line with giving, was slightly higher. He considered this needed further investigation.

10.4 The Council noted Richard Watson's warning in the Report: 'The forecast is already showing that there is not enough income to cover the expenses this needs to be addressed.' Several members pointed out that since the last Finance Report, for the period up to 31 August, the deficit had increased by another £5,000, broadly as a result of the decrease in planned giving and increase in energy expenditure. The trend was clearly upwards and given that energy expenditure would increase during the autumn and winter months, we could be facing a deficit of £50,000. Moreover, this trend was likely to be continuing in 2023. There was no action that could be taken retrospectively but action needed to be taken promptly in 2023 to achieve sustainability. Consequently, FinCom needed to make recommendations to the Council as to how to increase income and reduce expenditure.

10.5 TR observed that RC, TE and MJ had circulated a paper to the Council in October making proposals for reducing expenditure in 2022 and in 2023. This needed to be reviewed

in the light of the current figures and alternative proposals should, if possible, be made. He was happy to meet with FinCom to that end. This was agreed.

Action: By the next meeting of the Council on 24 April, FinCom to make proposals to address the long-term deficit (e.g. by considering how to increase income, reduce expenditure, use legacies for the General Fund etc).

10.6 The Council welcomed the inclusion in the Finance Report of figures for Israel. Members emphasised that as trustees the Council needed to be aware of the funds it held and what was happening to them. It was therefore agreed that FinCom should provide a list of the Council's restricted funds and include in the monthly report figures for those that are significant, i.e. where the amount in the fund or the monthly movement was substantial. This information was needed for operational reasons, as in the case of the Hardship Fund.

Action: FinCom to list all restricted funds held by the Council and include in the monthly report those judged to be significant, including the Hardship Fund.

(iii) *Charity Commission: Serious incident*

10.7 MJ reported that following the meeting of the Standing Committee on 6 March and JF's estimate that the records for 2022 would be up to date by 21 April, the Archdeacon had advised at the meeting of 15 March that the Council had a clear plan and therefore there was no need to notify the Charity Commission of a serious incident.

(iv) *Budget for 2023*

10.8 PD noted that a budget needed to be set for 2023. He was reminded that Colin Bird had advised that this need not to be detailed but could be estimated quite easily using the larger known figures for income and expenditure.

b. Buildings

10.9 The Council noted the Building Committee's March report. RC reminded the Council that it had reserved £50,000 from the Development Fund to meet the costs of the upgraded AV system but that the final cost was £57,000, leaving around £7,000 to be found from other sources. He said FinCom had recommended that this should be funded from the legacies received last year. This was agreed by the Council.

10.10 RC said that the church having spent a considerable sum on the refurbishment which now provided flexibility in seating layouts for services and other events, he was personally disappointed that the proposed system did not match that flexibility. Because of its fixed screens, it only supported the traditional layout with the congregation facing east. He considered this to be the consequence of inadequate consultation over the specification. Fortunately, this limitation could be remedied through the addition of additional, moveable monitor screens, albeit at an additional cost. The Council noted these comments.

10.11 RC asked the Council to approve the Petition for a Faculty for the upgrade of the AV system. He was seconded by MG. Accordingly, the following resolution was approved unanimously by the Council:

This Council approves the Petition for a Faculty for the upgrade of AV and projection systems, with replacement of aisle projectors and existing cameras, installation of additional monitors, speakers and cameras and relocation of the AV control desk. as detailed in the accompanying documentation, and authorises its submission by Roger Courtney to the Consistory Court of the Diocese of St Albans.

10.12 Dates for installing the AV system were discussed. The preferred date for commencing installation was 24 April. RC would convey this to the AV supplier.

Action: RC to arrange a commencement date convenient for the church.

10.13 RC reported that he had consulted the Diocesan Advisory Committee about the possibility of having a bicycle rack inside the West Door area and it had advised that it was content. The Council agreed to take this forward as a temporary trial to encourage the congregation to cycle to church.

Action: RC to arrange for the bicycle rack to be put in place.

10.14 RC explained that the Buildings Committee had considered the feasibility of a proposal for photo-voltaic panels on the roof of the Church Centre. While it was doubtful that the Council would be able to fund this given the estimated cost of £47,000, the Committee was investigating the possibility of grant funding e.g. from the Diocese.

c. Pre-School

10.15 The Council noted the March report from Pre-School Committee.

d. Climate Emergency

10.16 The Council noted the March report from the Climate Emergency Committee (CEC). RC said that the CEC's assessment for St Mary's qualifying for Ecochurch status was that we had surpassed Bronze level in November and had now reached Silver. The CEC wanted this achievement recognised within a suitably themed service where the formal certificate could be presented to the congregation. TR replied that the Harvest/Creationtide period in September and October would be suitable for this. He was thinking about having a number of services and other events over that period and requested the CEC send him its ideas for these in time for the next Preachers' Meeting on 26 June, preferably by early June.

Action: CEC to send TR ideas for the Harvest/Creationtide period in early June.

e. Missions Committee

10.17 There was nothing to report.

f. Health & Safety

10.18 There was nothing to report.

11. Deanery Synod

11.1 Deanery Synod had not met. However, TR and CH highlighted that the Diocesan Synod had met and discussed *Living in Love and Faith*. TR said he had been impressed by the gracious, generous, respectful manner in which the three speakers from conservative, liberal

and middle traditions had put forward their different perspectives. TR and CH considered that there was much to reflect upon for the way we welcome people into St Mary's.

12. Policies: Use of PCC Bank Accounts

12.1 The Council considered alternative drafts of the *Use of PCC Bank Accounts Policy* from GW based on the draft put forward at the January meeting by RC and MJ. After a fruitful debate, it was agreed that draft GW2 was the Council's preferred starting version. The Council also agreed that:

- the opening 'bullets' of principle (which set out the need for the Council's authorisation of expenditure from Council funds and for sufficient information about such transactions) should be re-instated;
- the new point 6 (that payment should not be made from the account without the corresponding funds first having been received) should be included; and that
- point 7 (previously point 6) should be deleted because it was covered by the second 'bullet' of principle.

It was further agreed that the draft should be returned to FinCom to ensure it was content.

Action: FinCom to see and agree the revised draft.

13. APCM

13.1 TR explained that as JF had estimated that the records for 2022 would not be completed until 21 April, there was insufficient time for the Independent Examiner to draw up the Annual Accounts for 2022 for the APCM on 21 May. In line with Archdeacon Janet's advice, TR would write to the Bishop of St Alban's explaining this situation and requesting the Bishop's formal approval to defer the approval of the annual accounts by the congregation until a second meeting later in the year.

Action: MJ to draft the letter to the Bishop.

14. Communication of PCC decisions

14.1 GW said she was concerned that the Council's decisions were not being communicated to those who needed to know. She cited the case of the previous day's communion service where, contrary to the agreed audio-visual policy, communicants had been filmed taking the bread and wine.

14.2 The Council agreed that when policies were adopted, the persons who needed to know about the policy e.g. the operators of the AV system in the above case, should be identified and the policy circulated accordingly. The policy should state at the bottom the names of those to whom it should be circulated.

Action:

- TR/Council to identify the relevant persons.
- MJ to add the names of such persons to the policy.

15. New AV system: Practical issues

15.1 Item postponed until nearer the installation date.

16. Vicar's Report

16.1 Among other highlights in the last month, TR reported that Mayor Peter Taylor had visited WTRRP at St Mary's; that he (TR) had attended a governors' meeting at Watford Boys' School; and Peterborough Cathedral in a follow up day to his October *Wisdom* conference; and he was continuing his work with the Hertfordshire Interfaith Forum. He was also discussing with Watford Rotary how they might become involved with the Thursday concerts to create a bigger audience.

17. Any other business

None.

18. Date of next meeting

17.1 The next Council meeting will take place at 7.30pm on 24 April 2023 in the Church Centre.

The meeting closed at 10.08pm with the *Living God's Love* prayer.

Marcus Jones
PCC Secretary