



Parochial Church Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2023 at 7.30pm

Present:

Rev. Tony Rindl (TR) - Chair
Eileen Roby (ER) – Churchwarden & Vice Chair
Peter Dean (PD) – Churchwarden
Roger Courtney (RC)
Tilly Elliott (TE)
Lesley Gray (LG)
Margaret Greenstreet (MG)
Cathy Honeyman (CH)
Gill Watson (GW)
Martin Whittick (MW)
Marcus Jones (MJ) - PCC Secretary

1. Opening Prayer

1.1 MW opened the meeting in prayer.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1 No apologies were received.

3. Conflict of Interest

3.1. None declared.

4. Approval of the Minutes of 17 July 2023

4.1 MG proposed that the minutes of 17 July 2023 be accepted. This was seconded by ER and approved unanimously by the Council.

5. Matters arising

a. Purchase of a card reader

5.1 The card reader had been purchased and was available for use in the church.

b. Legacy – Updating the legator’s family

5.2 MJ reported that he had advised the legator’s family that the Council were intending to use a significant part of the legacy for the re-painting of the clock faces and potentially also the purchase of a digital display board (DDB). The legator’s family had responded that they were happy with this but had asked to be kept informed in due course about how the balance of the legacy would be used. The Council agreed that MJ should advise them that it would be put into the General Fund until it could be spent appropriately.

Action: MJ to write to the legator’s family as above.

c.. Winter provision for rough sleepers

5.3 TR reported that Matthew Heasman (MH) had advised that New Hope had decided to make alternative arrangements by adapting *the Haven* in Whippendell Road and therefore did not require the Church Centre as a shelter for rough sleepers this winter. MH had said that he was nevertheless grateful to the Council for offering its facilities. TR said that in view of the significant increase in rough sleeping in Watford, the Church Centre should remain as a back-up and this was agreed.

6. Correspondence

6.1 None received.

7. Safeguarding

7.1 LG said that, although some Council members were yet to complete their training and provide references, the Council was otherwise fully compliant with Diocesan safeguarding standards and we were ‘in the green’ on the safeguarding action plan.

7.2 TR, ER and PD had drawn up a list of volunteers who required a DBS check. This was discussed and agreed.

8. GDPR

8.1 Nothing to report.

9. Health & Safety

9.1 Nothing to report.

10. Committee Reports

a. Standing Committee

10.1 The Council received the Standing Committee minutes of 6 August and 18 September 2023.

b. *Finance*

i. *Finance Committee*

10.2 PD explained that it had not been possible for the Finance Committee (FinCom) to produce a September Financial Report for the Council. This had been due to the difficulties with changing signatories with the bank which had meant that bank statements could not be accessed. PD explained that, as a further consequence, Myers Clark had not been able to complete the books and independently examine the 2022 accounts in time for the APCM scheduled for 1 October. Accordingly, the Council would need to advise the Bishop of the situation and ask for a further extension. PD considered that Myers Clark should have the accounts ready within a month or so.

Action: MJ to draft a letter to the Bishop requesting a further extension of the APCM.

10.3 PD advised that yet another consequence was that it had not been possible to keep the day-to-day records up to date. It was pointed out that this situation had arisen largely because only one person had access to the bank account and bank statements. PD replied that as more than one person now had access this situation should not recur. He envisaged that by the Council's next meeting on 23 October the temporary book-keeper should have the records prepared up to 31 July or perhaps even 31 August and that it should be possible to produce a Financial Report to the Council up to that time.

10.4 PD advised that members of the congregation had offered to assist with the finances (see section 6.1 of the Standing Committee minutes of 18 September 2023). The Council expressed its grateful thanks to them.

ii. *Energy*

10.5 PD explained that the contract for energy would shortly need to be renewed by FinCom. It therefore sought the Council's view whether, if it came to a choice between higher cost green energy or lower cost carbon-based energy, lower cost or green energy should be prioritised. The Council considered it unlikely that the Parish Buying Scheme would result in such a choice but, if it did, the options should be put to Standing Committee for a decision.

iii. *Brightwell Road*

10.6 PD advised that the tenants had given notice that they would be leaving the property; this was presently expected to be by the end of September. PD explained that this would result in a loss of rental income and the Council would also have additional bills to pay such as Council Tax. He gave notice to the Council that it would need to take decisions about the property in the near future once advice from the agent was received (see section 6.4 of the Standing Committee minutes of 18 September 2023 and Note for PCC on Buildings Matters - September 2023).

10.7 TR added that options might include refurbishing the property so as to be able to rent it out at the market rate. In such a case, he asked whether it would be the Council's intention to make the property 'green'. The costs might be covered from the balance of the

legacy (see section 5.2 above), which would be a good investment because it would produce an increase in income in the long term. Alternatively, the Council might consider an ethical use for the property, such as housing the homeless in partnership with New Hope.

10.8 RC advised that increasing loft insulation and similar straightforward work would be a legal requirement in any refurbishment but the Council would need to decide whether it wished to go further in view of its climate change commitments e.g. by insulating cavity walls. This would be a significant extra cost and advice would need to be sought from the agents.

10.9 The Council noted the situation and the options.

c. Buildings

10.10 The Council received the Report from the Buildings Committee.

10.11 Regarding the clock faces, RC explained that the contractor had informally indicated that re-gilding would cost around £15,000¹ and was expected to last around 40 years. However, it was not clear that the contractor had the capability to do this. He therefore proposed that the Council proceed with painting the clock faces in gold: while this lasted only around ten years it had the advantage of being substantially cheaper at £3,859 (excluding VAT). This was seconded by MJ and passed unanimously by the Council.

10.12 RC advised that he had written to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) about the possibility of a DDB on the north wall. They had asked some initial questions, including about the Council's Livestreaming Policy. He had replied to these and sent a copy of the draft Policy. The DAC had discussed the matter on 21 September but he had not yet been advised about the outcome.

10.13 TR added that the Archdeacon had been enthusiastic but had some queries, so it was likely the DAC would put further questions to the Council.

c. Climate Emergency Committee

10.14 TR and the Council considered that the Creationtide services on 24 September had been a great success and both informative and inspirational. In the morning, Bronze and Silver EcoChurch awards had been presented to the Vicar and Churchwardens respectively by Rachel Johnston, the Diocesan Environment Officer and Aga Dytchton, the Deputy Mayor. The latter had commented that St Mary's was leading the churches in Watford in action on climate change in the same way it was leading in other areas. She said she had thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the service and celebrating our awards. The lunch with Dean Russell MP had been fruitful. The Encounter service had been attended by over 60 people, many from other churches in the Diocese, and had included a Q&A panel of experts with politicians and representatives from local organisations. The Council expressed its

¹ *Secretary's note:* The contractor subsequently contacted RC and explained that their normal gilder had gone overseas and they had approached another one. They had revised their informal quote to £18,990 excluding VAT.

thanks to Andy Roby and the Climate Action Group for organising the day. The Council indicated it was keen to qualify for a Gold EcoChurch award.

10.15 Concerns were raised about the audio problems during the morning service which included the inability of the lectern microphone to pick up some voices and intrusive feedback from the chancel. It appeared that the upgraded system had not been adequately adjusted and tested. There had also been problems with the video side which probably stemmed from unfamiliarity with the system but might indicate the need for further training. The Council agreed that CAV should be contacted to investigate and resolve these issues.

Action: PD to ask Phil Hunter to liaise with CAV.

11. Deanery Synod

11.1 There had been no meeting.

12. Staffing

a. *Revision of contracts*

12.1 ER reported that termtime contracts had been drawn up and agreed with Pre-School staff and the Facilities Manager.

b. *2023 pay rise*

12.2 ER proposed that the Joint Office Manager and Facilities Manager be given a CPI inflation rise of 6.7% figure (the official figure for August 2023), backdated to 1 September. This was seconded by LG and agreed unanimously.

Action: MJ to advise Richard Watson of the rise for payroll purposes.

13. Policies

a. *Bullying and Grievance & Disciplinary Policies*

13.1 ER reported that she was consulting with the Archdeacon about aspects of these policies and would be updating them in due course.

Action: ER to update Bullying and Grievance & Disciplinary policies

b. *Conflict of Interest Policy*

13.2 MJ explained the changes the Standing Committee had made to the policy. He proposed these changes be agreed and adopted by the Council. This was seconded by TE and unanimously agreed.

c. *Livestreaming Policy*

13.3 In the light of the request from the DAC (see section 10.12 above) and requests for funerals to be livestreamed, it was agreed that the draft Livestreaming policy should be

finalised, including provision for those people who did not wish to be filmed. LG said she needed to know what platform the Council was using and PD agreed to advise her accordingly.

Action:

- PD to advise LG which platform the Council is using
- LG to finalise policy by 23 October

14. Trustee details for Charity Commission

14.1 ER reported that she needed to obtain access to the Charity's Commission's website so the updating of trustee details remained a work in progress.

Action: ER to update trustee details on the Charity Commission's website

15. APCM

15.1 This was deferred (see section 10.2 above).

16. Council Away Day: 7 October

16.1 TR undertook to draw up an agenda along the lines previously discussed (see section 16.4 of the Council minutes of 17 July 2023) by 30 September. He envisaged that the Day would start at 9.30am and finish around 2pm.

16.2 ER reminded TR that she and MW had offered their assistance in drawing up the agenda. Given that previous such events had not always taken things forward systematically, she considered that it was important to ensure the Day was well planned. In her view, if the agenda could not be drawn up in time, it would be better to postpone the Day rather than holding it with the risk of achieving little.

16.3 TR explained that the Day would be about completing the MAP rather than starting something new and it should therefore include a catching up exercise about the three 'Ps' and the environment. However, Council members felt they would prefer the focus of the Day to be broader. Their views included:

- wanting time to listen and discern God's vision;
- the need to follow any direction from the Diocese about the MAP.
- the three 'Ps' had been drawn up some time ago. We were now in a different, post-pandemic world and these needed to be reviewed in the new context; and
- reservations about 'Profile' which some felt they did not understand.

16.4 TR agreed that there was a need to review the three 'Ps'.

Action: TR to draw up an agenda for the Away Day with assistance from ER and MW by 30 September

17. Appeal to congregation

17.1 TR advised that this would now take place on 22 October as Meninadanca had been booked for 15 October. He would give a 15 minute presentation in lieu of a sermon and asked for assistance from FinCom to draw up some slides/charts. The Council were reminded of what had been agreed for inclusion in the presentation at the last Council meeting (see section 11.19 of the Council minutes of 17 July 2023). TR considered it would be helpful to include, in particular, information about the Parish Share and how it is used; relevant charts from the Diocesan website; and how much St Mary's cost per day to run.

Action: TR and FinCom to liaise over exact slide/chart content

18. Assistants for Communion

18.1 TR explained his selection criteria in drawing up the list of communion assistants circulated to the Council. The list was agreed unanimously.

19. Vicar's Report

19.1 The Council noted the Vicar's Report.

19. Any other business

19.1 There was no other business.

20. Date of next meeting

20.1 The next Council meeting will take place at 7.30pm on 23 October 2023.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm with the *Living God's Love* prayer.

**Marcus Jones
PCC Secretary**

Signed:
Chair/Vice Chair [Delete as appropriate]
Date: