

Minutes of a Meeting of Harwell PCC
held on Tuesday 12 January 2016 at 7.30pm in St Matthew's, Harwell

Present

Jonathan Mobey (Chair)	Jane Woolley (Secretary)	Lizi Bowerman
Jean Barton	Christina Wood	Monika Buxton
Andrew Keene	Mel Gibson	Frances Taylor
Peter Barclay-Watt (Treasurer)	Tony Hughes	Gordon Gill
	Hazel Connelly	

1. Opening & Prayer (JM)

Revd Dr Jonathan Mobey opened the meeting by reading Isaiah 42: 10-16 (“Sing a new song to the Lord...”).

Jonathan commented that this passage paints a picture of a new creation (“I will turn their darkness into light”) and that it calls everyone to be part of that. We too are called to invite people to that “song” we’re singing.

Jonathan then led the meeting in prayer.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Pam Rolls and Jan Radford.

3. Minutes of the October 2015 meeting

There were no amendments or corrections. A copy of the minutes was then signed as a correct record.

4. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

Godspell production

Jean Barton reported that she and Liz Roberts had a very good meeting with the organisers (Janet Spence, Janice Markey and Fiona Brennan-Scott). Liz Roberts gave the organisers a copy of the (revised) Concerts Policy. The organisers accept the constraints around the storage of props and of the possible occurrence of funerals at short notice.

Jean Barton requested one change to the script, to which the organisers were happy to agree. Much of the script is biblical text. There will be a resurrection scene at the end. Jean plans to pop in to rehearsals every now and again to see the way the material is actually going to be performed.

Rehearsals will mainly be in the village hall. There will be some rehearsals in the church building on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday preceding the afternoon and evening performances on Saturday 9 April. There will also be a rehearsal in the church building on the afternoon of the second Sunday in March. Liz Roberts will be liaising with the organisers about practical arrangements.

5. Decisions between meetings by Standing Committee

See Item 11 - Revision to Concerts Policy.

6. Finances

Accounts to 31 December 2015

The Treasurer took PCC members through the 2015 year end accounts, and answered queries.

The headline situation is that we finished the year with a £2,026 deficit. This was better than the situation anticipated in early December, and better than the budgeted deficit (£5,081) and was a result of additional giving during December.

A deficit means that our general/unrestricted income is insufficient to sustain our current levels of expenditure i.e. we are “living beyond our means”. We need to increase our income – ideally via increased regular giving.

If we project the current committed pledges for the Children & Families Worker through to August 2017, we will have raised a total of c. £42,500 towards the total three year cost to St Matthew's of £60,000. This means we need to find another £17,500 between now and August 2017 for this cost item – either through increased giving or donations, or from our reserves.

Jonathan Mobey said that the focus of talks in the services during January is giving, and with an emphasis on the Children & Families Worker. People will be given a related pledge form of some kind during the month.

The meeting noted that the accounts now need to be examined by the Independent Examiner. They will then be formally presented to the PCC for approval at the March meeting. Jonathan Mobey and Peter Barclay-Watt signed a copy of the accounts to be sent to the Independent Examiner.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Brenda Pyke (Book-keeper) for preparing the accounts so quickly.

2016 Budget

The Treasurer took PCC members through the proposed 2016 budget, and answered queries.

The headline is that the Finance Committee is proposing a budget in which, once again, projected expenditure will exceed projected income – this time to the tune of just under £8,000. That would decrease the unrestricted reserves to £22,557 by the end of 2016. As noted above, c. £17,500 of this could be needed to underwrite Children & Families Worker costs to August 2017.

The proposed budget assumes a 5% increase in planned giving over 2015, which would take that giving back to about what it was in 2014. It also assumes that we reduce the percentage of income allocated to mission giving from 12.5% to 10%. There are two relatively high buildings-related costs to be incurred - external masonry repairs at £9,000 and re-ordering of the Chancel at £8,000. The budget already assumes that £6,000 of the £8,000 for the Chancel will be funded from the Talbot Legacy. So postponing the Chancel re-ordering wouldn't in itself balance the budget.

PCC members agreed that it would not be prudent to postpone the masonry repairs.

Tony Hughes said that it was disappointing that our income from regular giving has not yet grown. Jonathan Mobey pointed out that our overall income has grown (particularly to fund the CFW), as our expenditure has grown.

Jean Barton recommended, once again, that the PCC consider the “Trio” approach to increasing giving. The Trio approach involves informing all church members what the income, costs, current pattern of giving, and future church mission needs are, and asking them to respond through regular giving in proportion to their means.

Jonathan Mobey wondered if the fact that we have some reserves reduces the inclination to increase giving.

Gordon Gill said that one option is to fund mission giving by appeal only i.e. no longer divert a percentage of income to this. Monika Buxton said that this is the tendency in the Lutheran Church.

Lizi Bowerman said that there is little in the budget that is dedicated to church growth. Other PCC members expressed the opinion that expenditure on the Children & Families Worker represents a major commitment to growth. Tony Hughes pointed out that there is also a £6,000 donation sitting in the Restricted Fund which is intended for “outreach” work.

The meeting then passed the following resolution:

Resolution	To approve the proposed 2016 budget.				
Moved	Peter Barclay-Watt	Seconded	Gordon Gill	Passed	Unanimously

The meeting expressed its thanks to Peter Barclay-Watt for all his work on the finances.

7. Buildings Committee Report

The Buildings Committee Report was noted.

Tony Hughes stated that item 10 (replacement of extension roof c. £8,000) in the Appendix to the report is to be deferred to another year due to other relatively high one-off building-related costs in 2016 and the overall budget situation (as mentioned in section 6. above).

There were no questions.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Tony Hughes for all his work.

8. Masonry repairs

Paper G refers.

The meeting passed the following resolution:

Resolution	To proceed with repairs to the north east buttress and other repair works as described by the Church Architect in specification 383 dated 3 September 2015.				
Moved	Tony Hughes	Seconded	Frances Taylor	Passed	Unanimously

Tony Hughes said that he has applied to the Oxford Historic Churches Trust (OHCT) for a grant towards the masonry repairs and expects the maximum award to be c. £1,000.

Gordon Gill recommended also contacting the All Churches Trust for a grant. Tony Hughes commented that grant applications tend to take up a lot of time and he would prefer not to have to divert effort from other things at the moment. Jonathan Mobey asked that if anyone knows someone who is willing to undertake grant applications, please let him (Jonathan) know.

As well as applying for the grant to OHCT, Tony Hughes said that it is hoped that the USA "Friends of St Matthew's" may be interested in supporting the project financially. Tony has provided Liz Roberts with some text and photos for the "Friends" Facebook page.

9. Improvements to St Matthew's building

Fit for the Future consultation

Paper H refers.

Hazel Connelly drew attention to her action recommendations in Paper H, arising from a review of the consultation responses.

There then followed a long debate about the right balance of investment or focus on the buildings side of church mission vs. the people side of church mission.

Tony Hughes pointed out that some of the comments reported by Hazel in the 31 responses talked about developing the mission further and implied focusing energy and money more towards the "people" side i.e. the activities undertaken by the church in the community. It tends to be people who bring people to faith rather than the buildings themselves. Tony said that he remains concerned that the PCC has not done enough to identify exactly how improved buildings would be used more extensively.

Jean Barton said that her experience when ministering in the north of England was that focusing on the people rather than the facilities was what brought success.

Gordon Gill pointed out that the Diocese/Bishop Colin is encouraging churches to use church buildings more imaginatively.

Christina Wood expressed the view that church members do undertake a lot of work in the community – both formally and informally. For example, Holiday Club, Advent Doors, the Pastoral Team, etc. Christina relayed that the quality of facilities can be important e.g. some newcomers to church recently said that they found the new children's area and the digital projection system very helpful.

Jonathan Mobey argued in favour of both buildings and people being important, and made a case for how the right buildings support church mission. Jonathan also pointed out that PCCs have a particular responsibility for church buildings and so PCC meetings naturally tend to spend a relatively high proportion of time on building-related matters. But if we neglect the human dimension, then of course this effort is wasted. We do undertake many activities, and we need the right facilities to run them. Combined PCC meetings are where we focus on the more people-orientated aspects of our church growth strategy.

The following actions were agreed, in line with the recommendations in Paper H.:

Action: Jonathan Mobey to communicate the church vision to church members, and the link with improving buildings.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to encourage further church members to consider the proposals and to give their views.

Action: Hazel Connelly to organise a day of prayer, and to speak to Pam Rolls about this.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to arrange a notice in the Broadsheet & service sheets about the feedback generated by the consultation.

Some respondents had found it difficult to comment without knowing the costs of potential improvements. Future consultations should include cost details and funding plans.

Chancel re-ordering

Tony Hughes gave a verbal update as follows:

The PCC passed a resolution at the October 2015 meeting to re-order the Chancel. The proposal document is ready to go to the DAC once we have a final decision on the model of chair to be used. Christina Wood is currently liaising with the chair supplier about fabric options.

Tony Hughes has let the DAC secretariat know the situation and that he hopes to get the proposal to them for their February or their March meeting. He would need to update the proposal by around 25 January to make the deadline for the February meeting.

Seating

Tony Hughes gave a verbal update as follows:

The situation as regards seating in the church as a whole is still as it was at the last meeting i.e. on hold pending feedback from Fit for the Future consultation, and further investigation into heating options.

In response to a question from Jonathan Mobey, Tony Hughes confirmed that the chairs chosen for the Chancel could also be suitable for the church as a whole. The only downside of that model for general church use would be that they are somewhat heavier than average, and you cannot stack as many on top of each other as you can with other models.

Heating

Tony Hughes gave a verbal update as follows:

Gas-fired radiator central heating option

Chris Dunphy of Christopher Dunphy Ecclesiastical Ltd visited St Matthew's, together with the church architect, on 3 November 2015 to advise on and quote for a radiator central heating system powered by a gas boiler. Chris Dunphy advised that such a system would be feasible for the main body of the church and the chancel, but advised keeping electrical heating in the extension. His quotation for a system is in line with Tony Hughes' estimate in July 2015 of £75-80k including VAT, including laying the gas supply.

Chris Dunphy suggested having a 100kW boiler in the upstairs extension storage cupboard. However, this location is not very accessible e.g. for maintenance and for using the time controls. It would also result in loss of storage space. Tony Hughes wonders if a better alternative might be in the church office. The flue could go out of the extension wall.

Chris Dunphy recommended having two double pipe circuits and 17 radiators and said that he was confident that this should heat the church uniformly. Chris suggested looking at arrangements similar to this at Ewelme Church and All Saints', Headington. Tony Hughes is in contact with these churches and hopes that they will also be able to supply figures for the running costs of their systems. The usage pattern of both these churches seems rather similar to the current situation at St. Matthew's.

There is a potential issue around whether some pipe runs would need to go under the floor at the back of the nave and whether they would go through walls. The location of possible tap-off points for any future extensions of the system would also need to be decided.

Gas-fired underfloor central heating option

This option is still open, but there has been no further work on it pending continuing investigation into the history and condition of the church floor.

Gas supply

A revised scoping quote from SGN suggests that the gas supply could be brought to a boiler in the upstairs extension via Church Lane. We would need to have a proper survey to confirm the practicality and cost of this. Gordon Gill commented that when St Mary's Church in Cholsey had a new oil pipe laid in a graveyard of similar age, the church had had to allow c. £10k for archaeological costs and the presence of an archaeologist associated with such excavations imposed by English Heritage.

Upgraded electrical radiant heaters option

Three quotations have been sought and two have been received so far. The third quote, and one of the other two quotes, need iteration over the precise choice of heaters because exact matches to the existing Linquartz heaters are not easy to obtain.

One quote received so far is for £6,496.13 incl VAT and the other is for £8,340.00 incl VAT.

10. Church Hall Management Committee report

Paper I refers.

Future day to day management arrangements for the Church Hall

Jonathan Mobey reported that the situation is now urgent because Anne Gill has indicated that she needs to step down from her role of managing the Hall day to day after the end of January.

Jonathan Mobey stated that if we revert to the previous arrangement of no external bookings i.e. church users only, then there would be a net additional financial cost to the church of c. £2k pa. Tony Hughes stated that this would be a great pity, especially as the reason appears to be simply lack of willing volunteers.

Jonathan Mobey has discussed the situation with the Church Administrator, Vicky Johnston. Vicky does not wish to increase her hours of work. However, she feels that she could deal with the work involved in taking initial enquiries/bookings within her current hours.

As stated in Paper I, Jonathan Mobey and Tim Roberts will have a meeting with the sole potential volunteer so far, Brian Zimmerman, and possibly with Vicky Johnston, to explore possible arrangements.

11. Health & Safety

Revision to Concerts Policy

The proposal is to adopt the amendments to the Concerts Policy shown in Paper J. These are in order to clarify event organisers' responsibility for health & safety in the church building.

This proposal was agreed between PCC meetings by the Standing Committee. No PCC member objected to this.

Extending the Concerts Policy to events other than Concerts

PCC members agreed the following actions:

Action: Jonathan Mobey to broaden the name and references in the Concerts Policy document to the "Events Policy".

Action: Jonathan Mobey to make other regular users of the church building aware of the Events Policy, and in particular its health & safety requirements – currently only Harwell Young Singers/Zara Zimmerman falls into this category.

Risk assessment for activities in the church building

Hazel Connelly is a health & safety expert. Hazel advised that we should have a risk assessment for any activities taking place in the church building. Hazel volunteered to help ensure that this happens. Hazel warned that recommendations arising from risk assessments can be costly to implement.

Action: Hazel Connelly to make a list of risk assessments required for the church building, and to pass this list to Jonathan Mobey.

Action: Jonathan Mobey, Mel Gibson and Christina Wood to check if any of the required risk assessments have already been done, and to ask Hazel to carry out any that have not.

Action: Hazel Connelly to carry out the required risk assessments.

12. Services & Seasonal

Harvest 2016

Monika Buxton will not be available to organise a Harvest Lunch in 2016. In the absence of anyone else being willing to organise this, Jonathan Mobey proposed that we do not hold a Harvest Lunch in 2016. This was agreed by PCC members.

Action: Jane Woolley to let the Village Hall Bookings Secretary know that we do not require the Village Hall this year.

Evening service on second Sunday

Until December 2015, this service had been the "Hands Free" service (in October and November it was a Hands Free fellowship group rather than a service). There was no service/group in December or January. In February 2016, there will be a St Valentine's Day service instead.

Jonathan Mobey proposed that there is no evening service on the second Sunday of the month for the time being from March 2016 whilst the Senior Leadership Team is considering other expressions of worship in the Benefice. The matter should be reconsidered at PCC in March or May. This was agreed by the PCC.

13. Future dates to note

End January – CAP Money course starts

7 February – Christingle

6 March – Mothering Sunday

24 April – Church Annual Meeting

30 April – PCC Awayday

14. Any other business

None.

The meeting closed at 10.25pm.

CHAIR

SECRETARY

DATE

DATE