

Minutes of a Meeting of Harwell PCC
held on Tuesday 5 July 2016 at 7.30pm in All Saints', Chilton

Present

Jonathan Mobey - present where "JM" is indicated in the item heading (Chair for items where present)	Andrew Keene	Hazel Connelly
Jean Barton (Chair for items where JM not present)	Jane Woolley (Secretary)	Lizi Bowerman
Gordon Gill	Christina Wood	Frances Taylor
	Mel Gibson	Sid Gale
	Tony Hughes	Martin Gibson
	Juan Bowerman	

St Matthew's, Harwell and All Saints', Chilton PCCs were present together for Items 1-3. The PCCs then dispersed into separate meetings to cover item 4 onwards.

1. Opening & Prayer (JM)

Revd Dr Jonathan Mobey opened the meeting by reading Ephesians 4 v.1-6 on the subject of unity.

Jonathan then led the meeting in prayer.

2. Agreement of agenda for items of joint business (JM)

It was agreed that the item of joint business that required a decision would be taken first, as per the order recorded in these minutes.

3. Items of joint business with All Saints' PCC (JM)

(i) Ministry apprentice/intern

Jonathan Mobey asked if anyone had any qualms about this apprentice/intern post, which was agreed in principle at the June Combined PCC meeting.

Hazel Connelly said that she felt uncomfortable after the June Combined PCC meeting because the PCCs were ostensibly being consulted about having an apprentice/intern post but it felt as though the decision had already been made. For instance, it appeared as though a PCC budget had already been allocated to part-fund the post, without reference to the PCC. Jonathan Mobey thanked Hazel for raising this concern, and apologised for creating this impression.

Jonathan Mobey reassured the meeting that there had been no intention to railroad the PCCs into a decision in principle to hire an apprentice/intern. Jonathan explained that the impression that this decision had effectively already been taken may have arisen from the pressurised timing involved, namely that:

- This post is mainly funded by the grant we have been awarded to run the Science & Faith project and we applied for this grant at very short notice;
- As part of the grant application, we had to state how we would fund project costs in excess of any grant award, and liaised with the PCC Treasurers about this;
- We were only notified about the success of our grant application just before the June Combined PCC meeting;
- We had to take a decision in principle about the post quickly to stand a chance of recruiting someone to start in September in order to deliver the promised Science & Faith events from autumn 2016.

Jonathan Mobey then clarified the following points in response to questions:

- We are keen to liaise with the Churn Benefice's Science Missioner, Jennifer Brown so that the Science & Faith project dovetails with her work. (Gordon Gill also commented that Jennifer might be able to suggest candidates for the apprentice/intern post.)
- The grant associated with the Science & Faith project has provided the platform for us to recruit an apprentice/intern for 12 months. Approximately one third of that grant (£2,880) will go towards the cost of the apprentice/intern. The rest is for physical resources, venue hire, etc. We have also had the offer of a gift to boost that sum.
- The apprentice/intern post will be for 12 months. A key part of the role will be to run the Science & Faith project, but it will also involve other duties i.e. a broader church ministry.
- The post could be for less than 12 months if that suited the apprentice/intern better. The Science & Faith project work would be completed by July 2017 so it would not be a problem if the apprentice/intern wanted to leave then. The salary would then be paid pro rata. As per the draft contract, either side only has to give 4 weeks' notice after the probationary period.
- Jonathan Mobey has had offers of accommodation for the apprentice/intern from four people so far, covering the period September 2016 to February 2017. Jonathan commented that this is encouraging given that the person who will be awarded the role is as yet unknown. Jonathan is aware of others' experience that it is often easier to acquire an offer of accommodation once a specific person has been appointed and people know exactly who they would be accommodating.
- Jonathan Mobey suggested that we could say to the successful candidate that the appointment is subject to suitable accommodation coming forward.
- The accommodation is for one person only i.e. if someone has a spouse or children, only the person appointed will be able to live in the accommodation provided. Jonathan Mobey will make this clear in the job/contract details.

Jonathan Mobey had circulated to PCC members in recent days a draft job description, contract and advertisement for the apprentice/intern post. Jonathan reported that he has now also created an application form, based on the one for the Children & Families Worker post.

Jonathan Mobey ran through the various comments he had received from PCC members on these documents and pointed out where he had made amendments to take account of these.

The following proposals were then made:

- Jonathan Mobey proposed that the application deadline should be 31 July with shortlisting the following week and interviews in the week commencing 8 August. We should then hopefully have someone in post by around week commencing 22 August.
- Jonathan Mobey proposed an Appointment Committee consisting of himself, a churchwarden from each parish plus Carina Lobley (as co-director of the Science & Faith project).
- Tony Hughes proposed an evaluation of some sort at the end of the contract, to inform whether such an apprentice/intern arrangement is successful.

Jonathan asked for a show of hands to indicate approval to proceed in accordance with the above three proposals. This was given unanimously.

(ii) Science & Faith project

This was covered by (i) above.

(iii) Fresh expression of church

A planning meeting took place on 1 July attended by eleven people. There is no specific proposal as yet.

There is another planning meeting on 12 July.

(iv) Didcot CAP centre

Jonathan Mobey reported that he had relayed back to the relevant local ministers that the Benefice has agreed in principle to support a CAP centre for the Dicot area, with the proviso that the PCCs are yet to agree a specific amount in their budgets or recruit the necessary volunteers.

Jonathan Mobey reported that the other local ministers were also able to confirm support as follows:

- Ridgeway Church – committed to the project
- Kings Church – committed to the project
- Didcot Baptist Church – committed in principle, but like us, would need formal budget approval in the autumn

Now that other churches have also indicated their support, we will need to address formally the matter of budget at the next Combined PCC meeting in September or at the individual PCC meetings in October.

Jonathan Mobey reported that he had had some responses to his initial request for volunteers at the June Combined PCC meeting.

4. Apologies for absence (JM)

Apologies were received from Peter Barclay-Watt (Treasurer), Michelle Walker, Pam Rolls (from this item onwards) and Jan Radford.

5. Minutes of the May 2016 meeting (JM)

Jean Barton should have been on the list of apologies. This correction was made by hand to a hard copy of the minutes. There were no other amendments or corrections. The amended hard copy of the minutes was then signed as a correct record.

6. Agreement of remaining agenda items (JM)

It was agreed that, where possible, items for decision would be taken first, as per the order recorded in these minutes. It was agreed that there were no items of any other business to add to the agenda.

7. Chancel re-ordering (JM)

Tony Hughes reported that since the last PCC meeting in May, we have received the required Faculty, and the chairs have now been ordered. The chairs will arrive in September or October.

Tony is currently trying to schedule a time with the joiner to remove the pews. Ideally this will take place in July, but it might be delayed until August.

8. Improving church heating (JM)

Paper B refers.

Jonathan Mobey asked if anyone would like to say anything about this proposal to pursue wall-mounted electric radiators as the best heating solution for the church building.

Jean Barton commented that it seems a perfectly reasonable proposal, especially given that the cost of wall-mounted electric radiators over 20 years would be lower than continuing with the existing heating system, assuming that the church were in use 3.5 days per week.

Andrew Keene commented that the proposal will also require the pews to be replaced by chairs. Jonathan Mobey confirmed that the PCC had previously agreed in principle to altering the seating in this way.

Jonathan Mobey asked Tony Hughes what is the point at which the cost of gas-fired central heating radiators would be lower than for wall-mounted electric radiators. Tony Hughes said that the projection is that the costs for the two systems would be the same over 20 years if the church is in use 7 days per week. This is because the higher cost of installing and maintaining a gas central heating system offsets the lower fuel cost of gas versus electricity. But, if we were to take a 30 year time period instead of 20 years for this scenario, then gas-fired central heating radiators would be cheaper than electric radiators.

Tony Hughes explained that gas boilers need to be replaced about every 10 years nowadays. Mel Gibson said that his understanding is that electric radiators should last at least 15 years.

Tony Hughes explained that the electric radiators in question are not storage heaters. They are basically electric convector heaters with some element of storage to them to make them more efficient.

Tony Hughes confirmed that the electric radiators have a thermostat, such that they will automatically switch on if the air temperature falls below a certain level. In the summer, we could either switch them off completely, or we could leave them on but with the thermostat set so that they only emit heat if it is unseasonably cold.

Tony Hughes confirmed that one advantage of electric radiators is that there are no water pipes involved, which avoids the risk of water leaks. It also means that further electric radiators can be added easily if we wish to extend the system to other areas of the church building.

Jane Woolley asked if electric radiators would need safety shrouds to avoid small children getting burnt by them, and if we need additional budget to cover this. Tony Hughes confirmed that shrouds would be needed in some places, but that the cost of these would fall within the margins of error of the cost estimates provided.

The meeting then passed the following resolution:

Resolution	To accept the recommendation in Paper B i.e. for a central heating system based on electric radiators, and to alter church seating accordingly.				
Moved	Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

Jonathan Mobey then asked if there were any comments on or objections to the proposed next steps in Paper B. There were none.

Jonathan Mobey thanked Tony Hughes and the Heating Working Group for all their work so far.

9. Improving church seating (JM)

Paper C refers. There are two decisions arising to make:

- the choice of chair
- the choice of flooring.

Choice of chair

Jonathan Mobey asked if anyone would like to say anything about the proposal to select the “Abbey” chair.

Hazel Connelly asked if the “Abbey” chair has an option for arms. Christina Wood confirmed that it does.

There then followed some discussion about the relative comfort of different models of chair. Christina Wood confirmed that the “Abbey” chair does not have any padding in the seat. Nevertheless it came out top in the ranking system when all the many factors were taken into account.

Christina Wood explained that there would be a ‘hammock’ between the chairs when they are linked, which can be used to hold Bibles.

Christina Wood also explained that when chairs are put in a continuous row, they have to be linked for safety reasons. This means that they will generally have to be laid out in a straight row rather than in

a curve, because the linking only works in straight lines. If we wanted to lay out chairs in a curve, we would need to break up the curve with spacing after a certain number of chairs.

Hazel Connelly asked if it matters that the “Abbey” chairs are different to the chairs which we have chosen for the chancel. Jonathan Mobey explained that we were required to have chairs of a particular quality in the chancel and that we wouldn't want the same chairs in the main body of the church because the chancel chairs will be much heavier to move around or stack. Jonathan is of the opinion that the chancel is a separate area and that a difference in the chairs there versus in the nave is not a major issue.

Jane Woolley asked what we would do about kneelers. Christina Wood said that we could put hooks on the back of some of the chairs to hang kneelers. However, very few people kneel nowadays, so it is not necessary to make a widespread provision for this. Jean Barton said that she thought it important to have some sort of provision for the small minority who wish to kneel.

Gordon Gill commented that it might be a good idea to provide a portable “courtesy rail” (similar to the ones in All Saints', Chilton) in front of the front row of chairs. This would provide something for those with mobility impairments to hold on to, it could incorporate a kneeler for those who prefer to kneel in prayers and might encourage people to use the front row more extensively.

Jane Woolley asked whether we already had all the funds needed to cover the costs of improving the heating and the seating, or if we would need to raise more money. Jonathan Mobey clarified that the total cost of the improvements is estimated to be about £90k (c.£38k for the heating and c.£52k for the seating and flooring). Jonathan reported that the Treasurer has confirmed that we have c.£70k set aside in unrestricted reserves for this project, plus we are expecting to receive c.£20k-£25k of Section 106 money from the Blenheim Hill housing development. Jonathan said that we should also consider applying for grants, especially those aimed at encouraging public buildings to increase their accessibility.

The meeting then passed the following resolution:

Resolution	To accept the recommendation in Paper C i.e. to select the “Abbey” chair as the best new seating for the nave.				
Moved	Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

Choice of flooring

Jonathan Mobey asked if anyone would like to say anything about the proposal to use carpet for the new flooring.

Mel Gibson said that he was concerned that carpet would not be as good as a hard surface for keeping clean from spillages or for some activities like dancing. Jean Barton said that she was wondering about how well a carpet would stand up to the wear and tear of the increased usage we hope the church will be put to. Tony Hughes pointed out that the present carpet has been there since 1988 and has worn quite well.

A detailed discussion about the various pros and cons of carpet versus hard flooring then ensued.

The meeting then passed the following resolution:

Resolution	To accept the recommendation in Paper C i.e. to select carpet as the most suitable new flooring in the nave, aisles and vestry, and this to be of a similar type and quality to the present carpet.
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Moved	Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	12 in favour 2 against 0 abstentions
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Jonathan Mobey asked the two people who voted against carpet if they could clarify their reasons.

Mel Gibson said that his concerns about carpet versus hard flooring were:

- More difficult to keep clean from spillages;
- More difficult to dance on / it would be inconvenient to have to put a temporary hard floor on top;
- The appearance;
- Less hard-wearing;

Gordon Gill confirmed that his reasons were the same, plus a concern about the acoustics arising from carpeted versus hard flooring. In addition, Gordon suggested we should take advice from the chair suppliers on how easy it would be to push the chair storage trolleys whilst fully loaded over a carpeted surface.

Gordon also raised the issue of the platform at the front of the church. If the move to chairs was about improving accessibility, we should consider access on to the platform. Tony Hughes said that this has been considered before and presents some practical issues. Jonathan said that this is a separate matter and needs to be “parked” for now.

Action: Christina Wood to check with the manufacturer of the “Abbey” chair if the chair trolleys push easily on a carpeted surface.

Now that heating, seating and flooring resolutions had been passed, next steps were discussed. It was agreed that we should treat these improvements as a single project, and that we should therefore submit a single paper to the DAC to get the proposed alterations approved as a package. This paper should include cost estimates, funding arrangements and timescales.

Action: Tony Hughes and Christina Wood to arrange a draft DAC paper ready for the next PCC meeting in October, consulting with other members of the heating and seating working groups as necessary.

10. Church Hall – the need to reinstate a management committee (JM)

Jonathan Mobey summarised the current situation, namely that Vicky Johnston manages the regular bookings, Jo Ray has offered to help with one-off party bookings, Brian Zimmerman manages the day to day running of the hall, and Tony Hughes manages the grass and hedge cutting and helps with maintenance and repairs. The PCC is responsible for the hall, but we currently lack satisfactory governance arrangements for dealing with non-routine issues and strategic decisions. In the absence of such arrangements, issues are referred to Jonathan Mobey by default. This is not ideal in the long term.

Jonathan Mobey said that the question is how do we rectify this situation? Jonathan proposed that the solution is to reinstate a church hall management committee, and that we need to agree how to make this happen. In particular, we need to find someone willing to chair the committee. The chair does not have to be on the PCC, as in the case of Tim Roberts, but there does need to be a suitable mechanism of accountability to the PCC.

Tony Hughes pointed out that a chair can take a hands-off role in terms of the day to day running of the hall. The minimum is that the chair needs to provide a mechanism for identifying issues that the PCC needs to know about or address, and draws these to the PCC's attention directly or via a PCC member.

With no immediate solution in view, the following action was agreed as a starting point:

Action: Jonathan Mobey to draft some terms of reference for the church hall management committee, including the role and responsibilities of the chair. Jonathan to check with Tim Roberts first in case he has something suitable already.

Martin Gibson offered to review these documents, once drafted.

Jonathan Mobey left the meeting at this point.

11. Lessons for Concert Policy from Godspell production

Paper F refers. Jane Woolley reported that Liz Roberts had subsequently raised by email two further issues in relation to the Concert Policy.

The following actions were agreed:

Action: Mel Gibson and Christina Wood to form a small group to discuss the ideas in Paper F, and to propose specific changes to the Concert Policy at the October PCC meeting. Mel and Christina to invite Liz Roberts to join their discussion and to ask her to comment on their draft proposed changes to the Policy.

Action: Jane Woolley to relay the two further issues raised by Liz Roberts to Mel Gibson and Christina Wood.

12. Hospitality/welcome role

The possible need for someone to spearhead "hospitality/welcome" as a whole was raised at the last PCC meeting in connection with the vacancy of Social Secretary.

Jean Barton established that there was agreement in principle that someone overseeing "hospitality/welcome" as a whole was a good idea. However no volunteer to do it had yet been identified.

After some discussion, the priority was generally agreed to be ensuring that attendees at the 11am Sunday services are made to feel welcome, particularly newcomers or visitors. It was agreed that a particular weak spot was ensuring that someone approaches newcomers or visitors at coffee time/immediately after the service. Martin Gibson wondered if the key was to make this part of the role of sidespeople and to train them to do it well.

Tony Hughes reminded the PCC that he and Mel Gibson had prepared and issued written guidance to sidespeople about how to ensure that newcomers/visitors in particular are made welcome (both before and after the service). A verbal discussion with sidespeople on this guidance had been arranged, but it was not successful as very few people took part.

Jean Barton said that she was willing to make a special effort herself to ensure that she talks to any newcomers or visitors. By doing this, Jean would hope to act as a “welcome catalyst” and that others will do likewise when they see her doing it.

Hazel Connelly said that her view is that we shouldn't rely on just one person doing it, and that everyone on the PCC should make an effort to welcome others.

13. Matters arising from the last meeting, not covered elsewhere

The only other matter arising identified was the action to relay decisions from the meeting about the Harwell St Matthew's Friends Scheme to Liz Roberts. Jane Woolley confirmed that she had done this.

14. Buildings Committee

Paper D refers.

Tony Hughes drew particular attention to the paragraph in the paper about the need for an asbestos survey of the church. This is a requirement that we should have met some time ago. This could lead to significant expense if the need for removal is identified, although hopefully it won't.

Tony Hughes reported that the asbestos survey of the chancel has now taken place and he is awaiting the report. Tony has had a quote for an asbestos survey of the rest of the church and this will cost about £400. Tony is going to wait for the results of the chancel survey before commissioning this other survey.

15. Church Hall Management Committee

Further to item 10 above:

Jonathan Mobey has taken the action from the last meeting to ask Brian Zimmerman to talk to him or to Tony Hughes about any maintenance issues whilst we are without a Church Hall Management Committee.

Paper E about road safety issues near the hall and arrangements for children's parties was noted.

16. Health & Safety – risk assessments

Hazel Connelly reported that she has decided that the best approach is to do one risk assessment for the whole church building, plus a separate fire risk assessment. Hazel has started preparing these risk assessments but needs to arrange for input from other people, so they are not yet complete. Action to be carried forward to next meeting.

17. Finance report

Papers G and H refer.

Gordon Gill relayed that his understanding is that our parish share payment is due to increase by 5% in 2016 and by a further 5% in 2017. However, we have only budgeted for a 4% increase in 2016.

Christina Wood said that her understanding is that St Matthew's Finance Committee has agreed to take up the Deanery's offer of a parish share increase holiday in 2016. Gordon Gill pointed out that it is important to ensure that the Deanery Treasurer is aware of this before the September Deanery Synod meeting.

Action: Christina Wood to check with the St Matthew's Treasurer that he has told the Deanery Treasurer that St Matthew's is going to take up the offer of a parish share increase holiday in 2016.

Jean Barton thanked the Finance Committee for all their work.

18. Decisions requested of Standing Committee between PCC meetings

The Standing Committee took the decision to approve the provision of alcohol (without charge) at the Father's Day service on 19 June at Chilton School. There had been no objections to this proposal.

19. Whether to reinstate the evening service on the second Sunday of the month

This is still on hold, pending a decision about fresh expression of church – see item 3 (iii).

The meeting closed at 9.40pm with Jean Barton leading the meeting in prayer.

CHAIR

SECRETARY

DATE

DATE