

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Combined PCCs of St Matthew's Harwell and All Saints' Chilton

held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 7:45 pm in St Matthew's Church, Harwell

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### Present

Norman Russell (Archdeacon)

#### Harwell

Kate Evans	Allan Macarthur	Jane Woolley
Sid Gale	Vicky Macarthur	(Minutes were taken by Martin Speed)
Mel Gibson	Tim Roberts (chair)	
Gordon Gill	Roz Shipp	
Georgina Greer	Steve Tunstall	
Tony Hughes	Jonathan Wood	

#### Chilton

John Berry	Carol Piggott	Liz Morris
Avril Butler	John Piggott	Jeff Nesbit
Naomi Gibson	Alex Reich	Ruth Poole
Hazel King	Andrew Hayes	

### 1. Prayer

Allan opened the meeting with prayer.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Pam Rolls and Stuart Gibson.

### 3. Minutes of previous meeting

No corrections or alterations to the minutes of the last meeting of the combined PCCs on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> of July were requested, and they were signed by the chairman as a correct record.

### 4. Appointment of the new Rector

Norman Russell described the process of appointing the new rector and invited and answered questions.

Norman Russell started by referring to his connection to the Parish (as former Rector) and saying that it was good to see some familiar faces from that time. He also said that he had checked with the Bishop of Oxford that it was proper for him to be involved in the appointment in a parish where he had such connections.

He said that he would run through the formalities of the process – in much the same way as he had done with the church wardens at an earlier meeting in June.

Norman Russell started by explaining that each benefice has a patron. In the case of Harwell and Chilton it was two 'corporate bodies': the Church Pastoral Aid Society and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Patronage. The Diocesan Board of Patronage is an elected body chaired by the Bishop or Archdeacon. Around 2 or 3 representatives from each body would be involved as members. Officially, it is the job of the patrons to nominate a replacement to the bishop who makes the appointment.

Each parish has two representatives and each of them has a veto. Norman Russell said that the parish representatives were relied upon to use their veto if they didn't feel that the right person was being chosen. Those elected as representatives were therefore in a position of great trust which they needed to exercise responsibly.

In practice the situation was slightly different from what the official documents might suggest. Once a profile is created then the patrons would work with the parish representatives to draw up an advertisement and interview collaboratively in team interviews. The patrons, bishop's representative and the parish representatives would work to achieve a consensus view. Norman Russell also reminded everyone that the whole process ought to be 'soaked in prayer' and the PCC and church should be involved in praying for the process.

Norman Russell paused to invite questions at this point. He was asked to clarify what was meant by 'team' interviews and explained that different people may ask particular questions, but all candidates would be seen by everyone.

Norman Russell stressed the importance of the appointment: saying that it was the most important thing that anyone will do on the PCC and that if you get the wrong person, then you can be fairly sure that it will go wrong for the church. He said that the profile is very important. It is sent to any candidate – a marketing document in the best sense of the word. It must give a fair view to prospective incumbents, including the vision where the church is and what anyone in the job will need to get done. It should encourage the suitable and discourage the unsuitable. Good profiles lead to good appointments. It was more important to get it right than to move fast.

The contents of a good profile included:

- (1) An introduction to the area. This should explain the social demographic and geographic situation of the place – both to understand the congregation and to help the candidates understand where they would be settling. Things like proximity to the railway may well be important to an incumbent whose spouse needs to get to work. Many candidates will have children and would like to know about schools and whether the primary schools are church schools. Details of the forthcoming Didcot Development needs to be included. Some co-operation will be needed on what should be done and the Rural Dean should be involved.
- (2) A description of the churches. This should not be so much about the buildings as the tradition of worship and the state of the groups in the church and the relationship with the villages.
- (3) Vision. The profile should set out the vision for the benefice (accepting that it was quite proper for the two parishes to have slightly different elements.) The vision is very important – and it is accepted that this would not be a case of starting from scratch. It would probably be a good idea to revisit and renew the vision even if already well defined. In this it would be good to involve an outside facilitator – but it is essential that the vision is owned by the PCC and congregation. Key goals for the next two to three years should be included.
- (4) Person profile. The profile needs to set out the person who can give appropriate leadership to work towards the vision and achieve the goals. The connection between the person profile and the other elements of the profile is essential. It must be a benefice profile – taking account of the needs of the two parishes and incorporating them into one.

The preparation of the profile was often best done by working groups sharing drafts (via e-mails and so on) so that the draft represents a living document.

It is important for the Churches and parishes as a whole to be involved. The PCC are responsible for the document but it would be good to involve groups in the community to share their views (though the loudest voices do not necessarily represent the majority view). The PCC must listen and then produce a balanced view.

Presentation is important. The profile document should reflect well on the parishes. The church web site should be up to date. Effort in presentation should not be at the expense of content, but once the content is right then another editor may be able to make it more accessible.

At this point Norman Russell paused again to invite questions.

He was asked whether the profile should include the financial footing of the church. He said that the accounts must be appended – and that there could be further comment if required (and that additional commentaries of this sort could go into appendices).

Should there be photos? Norman Russell recommended including these – but said that the people were as important to show as the buildings, and added that charts could be included to describe any demographic figures in a simple format.

Should AGM reports be included? While the PCC was at liberty to include whatever they thought fitting, Norman Russell thought it best to make use of material from such reports rather than reproducing them in total. (He noted that most of the profiles were sent out as e-mail attachments and so there was a need to keep the file size reasonably low.) He also added that additional documents can be made available to candidates who are shortlisted at the time they visit the parishes rather than trying to provide everything with the profile.

How up to date should the web site be? Norman Russell recognised that things go out of date quickly, but said that the more up to date the web was the better, and it was worth pulling out all the stops to achieve this. Mention of the web-site led to a discussion of the issue of the joint benefice and how it was represented. Norman Russell said that incumbents were wary of becoming a football between two parishes, and that an appearance of co-operation in the presentation of the web-site was beneficial.

Some local schools have put videos on their web-sites – are videos a good way of portraying the parishes? Norman Russell thought that they could be a good idea if done well – but that it was important to avoid anything with a ‘cringe factor’.

Norman Russell then moved on to ask about progress on the parish representatives. These were not appointed but he was told that the matter should be dealt with at the PCC meetings in the following week. Norman Russell asked to be advised of their names and contact details as soon as possible. The secretary said that this seemed to conflict with the official form which wanted the profile and representatives’ contact details to be provided together. Norman Russell asked that the forms be sent back with ‘profile to follow’ added. (He also asked that phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the parish representatives should be included.)

Norman Russell also asked about progress on ‘resolutions A and B’ (regarding female clergy.) He was informed by the secretary that in Harwell the PCC has been asked whether anyone wanted to propose these two resolutions and no-one did. Norman said that it should be included in the PCC minutes that the PCC had not proposed the two resolutions.

The process after the advertisement, Norman Russell said, was that he would meet with the other patrons to draw up a shortlist. Those on the shortlist would then be invited to arrange visits with their spouse to see the parishes. Some may drop out at that point. Candidates would then come for interview without their spouse, and having already had a good chance to see the parishes could be expected to make a quick decision if offered the position.

The degree of confidentiality needed for those visits was discussed. Norman Russell said that it was important to keep their interest confidential as it could be destabilising and damage their relationship with their existing parish if word got out that they were considering a move. Someone like a church warden should show them around – possibly including visits to schools.

They should meet key people, such as licensed ministers and staff, but it would not be necessary for them to meet all of the PCC. 'Trial by supper' was not seen as a good idea – particularly as the PCC might think that such a meeting was an opportunity to judge the candidates and this would not be appropriate (how they perform in a 'supper' social context would only be one aspect of the candidates skills).

Norman Russell was asked whether any prior knowledge of a candidate that he had would be included and Norman Russell said it would be dealt with in the context of a fair process in which each candidate had equal opportunity.

Norman Russell was asked why any clergy in post would want to change. Norman Russell said that there were candidates that would be coming to the end of a curacy and looking for a change, as well as those newly ordained who were looking for their first post. In addition clergy who had been in post for some time may well feel they were 'going stale' or had achieved all they were likely to in their present parish and would be looking for something new. Some existing clergy who were thought to be particularly suitable for a particular post were sometimes directed towards it by someone suggesting it to them (though any such suggestions were always made in the context of equal opportunities.)

Norman Russell was asked whether Pam Rolls needed to be excluded from PCC meetings dealing with the vacancy, and Norman said this was not the case.

Norman Russell was asked what timescale would be likely for the appointment. Norman Russell replied that firstly the profile had to be ready, and that when this was done then an advertisement would be placed. November to December were not a time when anyone would be likely to be able to pay attention to applications, so the second or third week in January would be the next most likely time to advertise. Norman was asked whether the Archdeacon had to agree the profile, and he replied that it was the PCC's document – though he thought it would be wise to let the Archdeacon see the document and comment on it because of the help he could provide.

Norman Russell was asked about the status of the Joint PCC in the process. It appeared from the paperwork that where a joint PCC existed then it should be responsible for making decisions. Norman Russell's recollection was that the constitution of the Harwell and Chilton joint PCC was that it was set up only to deal with business specifically passed to it by the individual PCCs. However, he thought that if the process required that there were resolutions passed by the Joint PCC then one could be convened specifically for this – perhaps a five minute meeting to formalise what the combined PCC meeting had agreed. It was also suggested that as the Joint PCC members were (of course) part of the combined group, that perhaps one meeting could represent the business of both. Norman Russell was comfortable with that arrangement too, provided it was thoroughly minuted.

Norman Russell was asked again about the timescale: what was the likely date when the new rector could be in post if the advertisement was place in early January? Norman said that the closing date would be around mid February and interviews could be expected to be after half term (allowing time for those on the shortlist to visit.) There may then be a need for time for CRB checking and anyone in post would have a three month notice period. This would suggest that someone may be able to take up the post early in the summer, but if they had children it would be likely that they would want to wait until the end of the school year, and it might then be better to wait until after the summer holidays. It would be most likely therefore that the induction would be in September next year. The average vacancy is nine months from formal resignation (and that date for Chris Stott is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010) so September 2011 would be around the typical vacancy length.

Norman Russell was also asked about visits to shortlisted candidates in their current posts. Norman said that this would probably be a bad idea because confidentiality would be compromised by any large gathering of strangers. Norman Russell did know of candidates being asked to provide such things as tapes of recent sermons – but he warned that the right person for one parish may be working in a very different way to the way they would work in a new parish depending upon the type of congregation. A good minister would suit their ministry

to the needs of the church they were working in, and so a current sermon might not be anything like what would be preached in a new church in a different environment. He also warned that to provide an equal opportunity to all candidates, it would not be right to visit one shortlisted candidate and not all of them.

Should the profile mention the rectory house? Norman Russell said that it would not be main factor for any good candidate – but was worth mentioning.

The issue of confidentiality for candidates, was raised again, and it was stressed that because it would destabilise the parish that candidates came from, every effort should be made to tell anyone the candidates met to keep the candidates identity confidential.

The composition of the interview panel was another question to Norman Russell. He said that it depended on the patrons, but would probably compose of one or two trustees from the Church Pastoral Aid Society, the four parish representatives, the chair and secretary of the Diocesan Board of Patronage and the Archdeacon.

Would the candidates be selected on interview alone, or would there be some psychometric testing involved? Norman Russell said that testing was not normal, but the arrangements for the interview would be made in consultation with the parish representatives, and may involve, for example, candidates making a presentation.

What was the situation regarding references? The standard form, Norman said, required three references and these would be taken up when the candidates were shortlisted.

Norman Russell was asked about responsibility for the advertisement and said that theoretically the patrons are responsible for the advertisement, but in practice the PCC representatives would be involved.

Norman Russell was asked about the section in the documentation the PCC had received (section 12) which referred to deciding on whether to have a meeting with the bishop. Norman Russell explained that all three parties (PCC representatives, patrons or the Bishop) could call such a meeting. This protected all of them in the event that they did not seem to be sufficient consultation – they each had the right to demand a meeting. In practice it was unlikely that there would be any problems requiring a meeting to be called as good relationships and trust were normally built up. However, Norman Russell said it would be likely that CPAS would want a meeting after the profile was ready so that they could discuss it, and Norman Russell would circulate some suggested dates in November 2010.

Norman Russell was asked about the impact of the discussions about options for the Deanery (options that might reduce the number of stipendiary clergy). Norman Russell said that there would be no impact. The Deanery had been alerted to the impending vacancy and been given opportunity to put forward representation to have the vacancy suspended, and they had not done so – so the appointment will proceed normally.

## **5. Any other business**

There were no other items of business raised.

## **6. Close**

Tim Roberts( Chairmen) expressed the gratitude of the meeting to Norman Russell. It was agreed that Andrew Hayes would be the main link person for Norman Russell's contact with the two PCCs.

The meeting closed at 21:31pm

**7. Next Meeting**

The next **Combined PCC meeting** will be on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010 at 7:45pm in All Saints Church, Chilton.

This will be followed by **individual PCC meetings** will be held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November in All Saints' Church Chilton .

These minutes were signed as a true record by:

----- Chairman

----- Secretary

On ----- (Date)