

Minutes of a Meeting of St Matthew's, Harwell PCC

held via Zoom on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 7.30 pm

Present

Eliza Wheaton (present for items 1-3, 14-19, 21-22 and 24-29)	Phill Johnston (present for items 10-19, 21, 22 and 24-29)	Liz Roberts
Tony Hughes (Chair)	Pam Rolls (present for items 1-4)	Jan Radford (present for items 1-4)
Hazel Connelly	Sid Gale	Gordon Gill
Tim Roberts (Treasurer)	Allan Macarthur	David Pyke (Guest: present for items 1-4, 23 & 20)
	Jane Woolley (Secretary)	

St Matthew's, Harwell and All Saints', Chilton PCCs were present together for Items 1-4. For the other items, only St Matthew's PCC members were present.

Items are minuted in agenda order but were in fact taken in the following order: 1-8, 23, 20, 9-19, 21, 22, 24-29.

1. Opening & Prayer

Pam Rolls asked that we all continued to pray for wisdom for all those involved in the interview process the following day and read from the letter of James. Pam remarked that we are all tired and have gone through a time of trial during the interregnum, but God will use that hard work for His glory and help us to develop perseverance and grow into a mature faith. She reminded us to trust in God who has everything under control.

Pam Rolls led the meeting in prayer.

2. Update on appointment process for a new Rector

Allan Macarthur commented that three candidates were being interviewed on 8th March and all the arrangements had been made for the service at All Saints', interviews in the church hall, lunch in St Matthew's and visits to Chilton Primary School and the Rectory.

Hazel Benton asked about the proposed gift to the Rector to help with re-decoration of the Rectory. Allan reported that it would be a joint gift from both parishes to be discussed in the individual PCC meetings. There has already been general cleaning including the carpets, but due to work carried out by the Diocese, there needs to be initial work done to repair holes in the walls etc. before painting can happen so more skilled people need to be involved than a working party.

3. Extra support for the C&FW

Paper A 1 refers- temporary support for Sarah Barrett in the run up to Holiday Club. Vicky Johnston has been suggested to provide this help. It was proposed that the Joint PCC (Combined Standing Committees) are delegated to make the finer decisions as it needs to be moved forward quickly as assistance needs to start as soon as possible.

A straw poll of the PCCs indicated that all were in favour of this proposal.

4. 2022 Annual report

Paper A2 refers. These sections were approved in principle, for formal confirmation later in the meeting by the individual PCCs.

5. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Rebecca Lewis.

6. Decisions requested between meetings

Date	Whole PCC or Standing Committee?	Subject	Result
November 2023	Standing Committee	To run a warm space at The Harwellian every Thursday 1-4pm with the church to provide the funds to cover the venue cost of £5 per hour and the volunteers to run it <i>(Note: the original intention had been to use Harwell Helpers funds to cover the cost. However, the Treasurer subsequently successfully applied for a 'Warm Hubs' grant of £300 from the Diocese instead)</i>	Passed: unanimously
December 2023	Standing Committee	Harwell Helpers funds: To distribute £1k from Harwell Helpers Fund to Didcot Foodbank	Passed: 6 for; 1 person no vote recorded
January 2023	Whole PCC	PCC Treasurer: To accept the resignation of Phill Johnston and appoint Tim Roberts as Treasurer	Passed: unanimously
January 2023	Whole PCC	Finial crosses on church roof: (i) To restore the missing or broken finial crosses on the south transept, north transept and the chancel, (ii) to ensure the stability of the existing finial crosses on the porch and nave, and (iii) to repair the spalled stonework on the parapet between the nave and chancel	Passed: 12 for, 1 against
January 2023	Whole PCC	Staff pay: That both the C&FW and Administrator salaries are increased in line with December CPI and that this would be a 10% increase back dated to 1st January	Passed: unanimously
February 2023	Whole PCC	Emergency aid: To donate up to £350 from the "Rectors Discretionary Fund" towards the storage costs of the belongings of a victim of domestic abuse	Passed: 12 for, 1 against

7. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the PCC meeting on 1 November 2022 were approved and will be signed in due course.

8. Matters/actions arising from the previous meeting not covered elsewhere

There were none.

9. 2022 Accounts

Paper D refers. Tim Roberts lauded the hard work of Nick Clarke as Bookkeeper e.g. his organisation, diligence and promptness at paying invoices.

Tim Roberts highlighted that planned giving had recovered in 2022 to slightly above pre-pandemic levels, and that increased interest rates have had a positive impact on interest received.

Jane Woolley reported that she had just emailed Tim Roberts a list of minor typos for correction.

Resolution	To approve the 2022 accounts, with the typos identified by Jane Woolley corrected				
Proposed	Chair	Seconded		Passed	Unanimously

10. 2023 Budget

Paper E refers. Tim Roberts said that the Finance Committee tends to be conservative in its assumptions when proposing the annual budget. The 10% Parish Share rebate from 1 January during the interregnum has not been factored into the budget, providing some opportunities for flexibility.

Resolution	To approve the 2023 budget				
Proposed	Hazel Connelly	Seconded	Liz Roberts	Passed	Unanimously

It was noted at item 17, but recorded here, that line 31 of the 2023 budget includes **a donation of £1k to the local CAP Debt Centre**. Given the above approval of the 2023 budget, this donation was thereby also approved. Phill Johnston requested that this donation be made as soon as possible. Liz Roberts emphasised that this extra £1k is to go to the local Debt Centre, not to CAP headquarters.

Tony Hughes requested that budget line 40 (Church maintenance – extraordinary repairs/projects – currently £3,660) be kept to just the £2,000 for special projects (e.g. floodlights) and the other £1,660 for maintenance of the organ, fire extinguishers, clock and bells be put in a new budget line called 'Church maintenance – other maintenance items'.

Action: **Tim Roberts** to:

- Ask the Bookkeeper to make the £1k donation to the **local CAP Debt Centre** as soon as possible
- Split out budget line 40 as detailed above

11. 2022 Fabric Report

Paper F refers. Allan Macarthur (Churchwarden) thanked Tony Hughes and David Pyke for all that they do to manage the fabric of the church and church hall.

Resolution	To approve the 2022 Fabric Report				
Proposed	Allan Macarthur	Seconded	Hazel Connelly	Passed	Unanimously

12. 2022 Annual Report

Paper A2 refers. Tony Hughes thanked the two PCC Secretaries, Jane Woolley and Naomi Gibson, for compiling the Report. He also thanked Debra Dewhurst in anticipation of her work in due course to improve the layout.

Tony Hughes raised a discrepancy between the 2023 budget figure for total income in Appendix 4 of the Annual Report and the figure given in the 2023 budget in Paper E.

(Post meeting note: This discrepancy was found to be due to a difference in the budgeted interest income stated in the two documents; this was £1,500 in Paper E but only £500 in the Annual Report. Paper E was more up to date and the Annual Report was amended accordingly)

Resolution	To approve the 2022 Annual Report, subject to a check on the 2023 budget figure for total income in Appendix 4				
Proposed	Allan Macarthur	Seconded	Hazel Connelly	Passed	Unanimously

13. Annual Meeting Agenda

Paper G refers. It was agreed that we would do without item 7 this year (a presentation on some aspect of implementing the church's vision).

Resolution	To approve the 2023 Annual Meeting agenda but without item 7				
Proposed	Allan Macarthur	Seconded	Hazel Connelly	Passed	Unanimously

14. Encouraging PCC nominations

PCC members: Jane Woolley, Secretary, reported that Phill Johnston, Liz Roberts, Tim Roberts and Hazel Connelly are willing to stand for election. If all of those stood, there would still be a further two vacancies.

Tony Hughes said that it behoves all of us to approach other potential candidates.

Hazel Connelly said that she would only be here for another couple of months after the Annual Meeting and so would give way to other candidates if necessary. Jane Woolley highlighted that we would be losing Hazel's Health & Safety expertise and it would be good to find someone to serve on the PCC who has that expertise.

Deanery Synod representatives: Gordon Gill and Sid Gale confirmed that they are willing to stand again.

Churchwarden to replace Allan Macarthur: Jane Woolley reported that she had agreed to stand for election. Allan Macarthur said that he and Eliza Wheaton were working on back-filling Jane's current responsibilities e.g. PCC Secretary.

15. Finance: Sound system upgrade fund

Resolution	To change the "Sound system upgrade fund" to the "Sound system and audio-visual upgrade fund"				
Proposed	Tim Roberts	Seconded	Gordon Gill	Passed	Unanimously

Resolution	To approve using the "Sound system and audio-visual upgrade fund" to pay for the £280 expenditure on the monitors for the orchestra and the church office that took place in autumn 2022				
Proposed	Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

16. Finance: A gift for the new Rector

Paper H1 refers. Tony Hughes said that one possible source of funds for this gift would be out of the 10% Parish Share rebate from January 2023 during the interregnum.

Resolution	To agree in principle that the PCC will offer the new Rector a gift towards redecoration costs, and to delegate the decision about the exact amount to the Standing Committee				
Proposed	From the Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

Resolution	To offer church members the opportunity to contribute towards the above-mentioned gift. This would be via a very soft message in the weekly notice sheet and e-bulletin rather than a formal 'appeal'				
Proposed	From the Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

17. Finance: Harwell Helpers fund

Paper H2 refers. Tony Hughes has established that a large proportion of the money in the Harwell Helpers fund was donated by grants from SSE and the County Council. These have conditions which mean that they should not be used to support projects with political or religious intent. We therefore need to bear that in mind when deciding how best to distribute the remaining money.

Tony Hughes reported that he has been liaising with the Clerk to the Parish Council. The Parish Council is going to discuss at their next meeting whether they have any suggestions for how the money could best be distributed. Tony therefore suggested that the PCC should wait until it has the Parish Council's view before making any decisions about how to distribute the remaining money. This was agreed.

It was also agreed that any notices in Harwell News about the distribution of the Harwell Helpers money needs to be worded with great care. It was agreed that any announcements would be drafted by the churchwardens and approved by the Standing Committee in the absence of a Rector.

18. Finance: Mechanics of payments to the Youthwork Trust

The PCC noted Paper I which explains how the payments work. Tony Hughes thanked the Finance team for clarifying this.

19. Buildings: Buildings Committee Report

The PCC noted Paper J. Tony Hughes drew attention to item 1 in the Report about the old clock mechanism. Tony reported that a recent email from the DAC's clock adviser suggests that it is unlikely that we would get permission to display the clock mechanism anywhere other than in the church because of its special antiquity.

20. Chancel Roof

Paper K refers.

Resolution	To start a new designated fund: Chancel roof replacement				
Proposed	From the	Seconded		Passed	Unanimously

	Chair				
--	-------	--	--	--	--

Action: **Tony Hughes** (Chair of the Buildings Committee) and Tim Roberts (Treasurer) to discuss how much to transfer from one of the legacies into this fund in the first instance

21. Buildings: Cleaning the chancel chandelier

Action from November 2022 meeting: Liz Roberts to confer with Tony Hughes and follow up an offer of help subsequently received from a member of the community.

STATUS: Done. The chandelier is being taken down on 11 March by a team overseen by Mike Pepper. Liz Roberts is supervising a cleaning operation during 13-15 March for which further volunteers would be welcome.

(Post meeting note: due to one of the helpers testing positive for Covid this whole operation was postponed until later in March.)

22. Buildings: AV upgrade

Paper L refers. It was noted that the “Sound system and audio-visual upgrade fund” (ref agenda item 15) has about £2,650 in it after the £280 cost of the monitors for the office and the orchestra is deducted. This is approximately the level of expenditure mooted by Paper L.

Tim Roberts wondered if item 1 (iii) in Paper L – an electronic noticeboard – is in rather a different category to the other items and should be considered separately. Allan Macarthur said that Paper L was just a list of ideas. Allan said that the next step is for him to prepare a more specific proposal about sound and audio-visual upgrades and to consider in more depth what the scope should be.

Resolution	To delegate approval of a more specific AV upgrade proposal to the Standing Committee, providing that the total cost does not exceed the current amount in the upgrade fund				
Proposed	From the Chair	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

Allan Macarthur said that sound and audio-visual systems inevitably require routine repairs and periodic upgrades. He recommended putting aside £500 per year into the upgrade fund on an ongoing basis.

23. Buildings: Possible sale of the Church Hall

Papers M and N refer. Tony Hughes thanked Hazel Connelly and the rest of the working group for their work and their very thorough examination of all of the issues. Hazel Connelly summarised that the question of what to do about the Hall was more complex than the group initially thought it would be and it is not yet clear what the right decision is.

Tony Hughes remarked that the working group has undertaken extremely valuable groundwork for when this question is re-examined in due course.

Various PCC members then asked Hazel Connelly some questions. These revealed the following information:

- The working group consulted Tony Hughes about whether there are any expected large one-off maintenance requirements over the next 10-15 years e.g. replacing the heating or ventilation systems. Tony had provided some estimates for items such as external re-painting but does not anticipate that the heating or ventilation systems would need complete replacement. There could though be a need to replace failed components, as was necessary for the heating system about ten years ago. The working group's figure for the annual running cost of the hall include an allowance for one-off larger maintenance items.
- Hall expenditure is c.£3k pa more than Hall income. But without the Hall we would have no similarly sized space to run Kids Church on Sunday mornings. Kids Church is getting rather cramped in the church lounge and the C&FW is about to trial holding it in the Hall instead. It would probably cost at least £1M to put a similar sized extension onto the church.
- Allan Macarthur has told the Plymouth Brethren not to expect a decision about whether to sell the Hall until later in the year.
- Tony Hughes is now the point of contact about the Hall for the Plymouth Brethren.

24. Church-Scouts relationship

Paper O refers. The churchwardens will be taking forward the actions at the end of Paper O.

Tony Hughes commented that the original intention of Scouts contributing financially to the cost of church hall cleaning was that it was a convenient mechanism by which Scouts could contribute to the running costs of the hall i.e. it was essentially an "affiliation fee" as opposed to literally being for cleaning associated with their own use of the hall.

25. Manpower: Pastoral Care lead

Eliza Wheaton reported that she and Pam Rolls have approached a few people who have all said no. So they are still looking for someone. Eliza said that she would discuss with Pam the person who Tony Hughes had recently suggested to her.

26. Health & Safety: Regular review meeting

Action from November 2022 meeting: Hazel Connelly to arrange a regular Health & Safety review meeting with the churchwardens and church Administrator.

STATUS: Outstanding

27. Health & Safety: Funerals

Paper P refers. The PCC noted that Hazel Connelly will work with the churchwardens to mitigate the risks arising from very large funerals.

28. Future dates to note

Wednesday 8 March – Rector interviews
Tuesday 4 April – Combined PCC meeting
Sunday 9 April – Easter Sunday
Sunday 16 April – Annual meeting
Saturday 6 May – Coronation
Sunday 7 May – Church lunch at St Matthew's (tbc)
Monday 29 May – Harwell Feast
Tuesday 6 June – St Matthew's PCC meeting

29. AOB

Coronation weekend

Liz Roberts reported that the Parish Council is seeking expressions of interest to showcase voluntary organisations in the Village Hall on the Monday. Liz has offered to represent CAP. Liz wondered if the PCC would like her to represent St Matthew's and its activities as well. The PCC accepted this offer with thanks. Allan Macarthur said that he would clarify with the Church Administrator whether she had previously given the Parish Council a response on St Matthew's behalf and let Liz Roberts know, as context for Liz's communication with them.

Liz Roberts expects to hear by the end of March if the Village Hall event will be going ahead and will let the churchwardens know.

Allan Macarthur reported that the SLT is discussing other aspects of the coronation weekend e.g. whether we will hold a special service on the Sunday morning followed by a bring and share lunch. Tony Hughes suggested that decisions like these be left to the SLT and PCC members agreed to that approach.

Equipment for C&FWs

Allan Macarthur asked for views about whether the C&FW fund could be used to provide C&FWs with any equipment they need e.g. a laptop. Allan said that the protocol is that assets such as laptops are owned and maintained by one PCC. PCC members indicated that they would be content with it being used for equipment as well as for salaries. Tony Hughes suggested that Allan Macarthur and Tim Roberts agree the finer details of that outside the meeting.

Tony Hughes closed the meeting with The Grace at 21.55.

CHAIR

SECRETARY

DATE

DATE