

Minutes of a Meeting of St Matthew’s, Harwell PCC
held at St Matthew’s Harwell on 4th March at 7.30pm

Present: Revd Jeremy Parsons (Chairman)

- Tony Hughes (Vice Chairman)
- Jane Woolley (Church Warden)
- Liz Roberts
- Adrian Bollon
- Adrian Rance- McGregor
- Rebecca Lewis
- Stephen Manning
- Elizabeth Clarke (Secretary)

St Matthew’s, Harwell and All Saints’, Chilton PCCs were **present together for Items 1-13**. For the other items, only St Matthew’s PCC members were present.

1. Opening and Prayer

Jeremy opened with a gospel passage from a Children’s Bible Book. He reminded those present that the challenge for the Church was how to engage the next generation, and that this was an exciting time to be a member of the church. He then led the PCC in prayer.

2. Thanks

Elizabeth reported that both she and Naomi had received thanks from Leaders and Preachers for the gifts they had received at Christmas.

3. Children, Young People and Families (CYP&F) Oversight Group Report

Phil Corbishley presented this Report to the Meeting. He said, in answer to a question about the delay in the reporting of the Group’s existence, that the Group had needed to take time to consider their Vision and how they proposed to work towards achieving it, but now felt ready to present it to both PCC’s. There were three points which they requested PCC endorsement:

- 1 The creation of the CYP&F Group with accountability to both PCC’s.
- 2 The proposed Vision for CYP&F work and the Role of the Group.
- 3 Advise on the selection of church community representatives to join the Group.

The Meeting expressed its enthusiasm for the contents of the Report and thanked the Group for the time they had spent in preparing it. They also expressed their excitement for the Vision it contained. Phil asked whether the Group would be accountable to both PCC’s or the Joint PCC. It was felt that this point needed further clarification which might come following the proposed restructuring of the Church’s governance which was currently under review.

In answer to another question Phil said the Group saw itself as more executive than advisory. This prompted a discussion regarding the line management of the Children’s’ and Family worker once they were appointed. It was generally felt that this should be the Rector, but the job holder would work closely with the Group. In that case, the group would be supportive or advisory rather than executive. It was agreed that individual PCCs would discuss the selection of their representative.

The Three Points requiring endorsement were then put to the vote:

Resolution	The creation of an CYPF Oversight Group with accountability to the PCCs				
Proposed	Judith Russell	Seconded	Jane Wooley	Passed	unanimously

Resolution	Endorsement for the proposed Vision for CYPF work and the Role of the Group				
Proposed	Tony Hughes	Seconded	Stephen Manning	Passed	unanimously

Resolution	To select church community representatives to join the Group				
Proposed	Adrian Bollon	Seconded	Adrian Rance-McGregor	Passed	unanimously

(Phil then left the meeting)

4. Children and Family provision and Update on C&FW position

Jeremy reported that while our advertisement had had one applicant, and ECHO's advertisement had had two, none of them were felt suitable for interview. ECHO plan to re-advertise.

Jeremy said that his instinct was that we needed to focus on our own congregation and contacts for potential recruits. However, if someone was recruited on a shared basis, they would join ECHO for training, and then focus on Great Western Park and Valley Park, but cover Harwell and Chilton particularly the schools. Our full-time post is still open but it is still a difficult time to recruit. A discussion followed about the issues involved in attracting candidates, and Jeremy said if the Diocese's current bidding for National Church Funding was successful, this might help the situation. He also pointed out that, if successful, the Vision outlined in the previous paper would make the post more attractive. Tony commented that this made it even more important that this Group were properly resourced and have good lay support, particularly from the PCCs.

5. Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Report was approved, and Sue Greatbanks and Judy Gold were thanked for their work. The 2025 St Matthew's and All Saints' Safeguarding Policy was approved and signed by the Rector. PCC noted that it will need to approve an annual Action Plan setting out safer activities and practices, and that the Safeguarding Officers would be presenting their Action Plan to PCC at a subsequent meeting. The Church website will be updated to include the new Policy.

6. Holiday Cub

There will be no Holiday Club this year as we have no C&FW.

7. ECHO

The re-advertising of their Youth vacancy had been dealt with earlier. They also have a possible candidate with Kings Church for a different vacancy.

8. Draft Annual Report

Sections 1 – 4 were presented to the Meeting but approval of them, and the individual sections that followed, were left to the individual PCCs to discuss.

9. Fundraising Update.

Tim Roberts had sent his apologies and Stuart Gibson was delayed so Elizabeth Clarke, another member of the Fundraising Group gave the update. She told the Meeting that five letter formats had been agreed by both Standing Committees, although the contents of the letters might vary to take account of each parish's position. These were:

- a) Letter to regular givers
- b) Letter to those on electoral roll

- c) Letters to be given out at the end of services on a specific Sunday.
- d) Letter to be placed on the Website and potentially on Village noticeboards
- e) Letter for inclusion in the Villages' magazines.

Leaders of church groups would be briefed in preparation for any questions and the Benefice website updated.

Harwell had identified Sunday 16th March to have a fundraising briefing at services and a sermon which would reflect this. However, Jeremy said that this would no longer be possible, as there was now a Baptism on 16th. After discussion, it was agreed the briefing and sermon would have to be delayed at St Matthews' until 6th April. (subsequently it was agreed to soft launch the Harwell fundraising at the Evening Service on the 16th, and this would be followed with a fundraising briefing and sermon at the morning service on 6th April. The letters would still be dated 15th March).

10. IT Infrastructure.

Jane Woolley said that the IT infrastructure needed to be improved. David Evans has agreed to do some work, but more help is needed to improve other areas. Judith Russell had agreed to approach a possible person, but Jane asked PCC's if they also could try to identify other people who could do some of the tasks outlined in her paper. (D)

11. Valley Park Update

Jeremy said that in October, he had told PCC that from January he would be spending two working days a week on Valley Park. Hazel Benton asked how this was working out. Jeremy replied that there was not much need for involvement at present, and Sasha would not be returning from maternity leave till September. He has therefore decided, for the moment, to reduce the time he allocated for Valley Park and use this time to concentrate on Fledglings following Lucy Ryan's resignation. Pat Moseley then asked whether Jeremy was still intending to spend one day a week in Chilton, as he had previously undertaken to do. He replied that when he and Deborah had done this only three people had come to see him, and he felt he could still be available to Chilton without needing to be physically there one day a week. This made better use of his time, particularly as he was currently not in great health. Pam Rolls commented that his presence in Chilton one day a week had never been advertised, so most people were unaware that he was in the church extension.

12. Update on the consultation on committee structure and decision making

Jeremy said that there was no actual report from Geoff Maughan to bring to PCC. He was using him as a workplace consultant and Geoff had given him a brief, which he was now considering if he could work with. He was reviewing the roles of PCC and Standing Committee, and considering a structure where proposals would be considered by Standing Committee and then brought to PCC in a developed form for discussions or a decision. This could result in shorter PCC meetings as the detailed examination of proposals would have already been done by SC. Tony Hughes voiced a concern that PCC might feel disenfranchised, and people would be less inclined to serve. There was already a reduction in the number of PCC Meetings, and a feeling that some PCC members were less involved in developing business than is desirable. Jeremy said it was not his intention to bypass PCC, but their meetings should not involve a long and detailed examination of proposals. This was the work of Standing Committees. He cited the example of the new CYP&F Oversight Group where the work had been done in the background and then brought to PCC for agreement. Others agreed that PCC Agendas were too long. Hazel said that many on the PCC had expected Geoff to produce a report to them, and did not understand why this had not happened. Rebecca Lewis asked how, under these arrangements, would a PCC member get the opportunity to get involved at the discussion stage. Jeremy acknowledged the mood of the meeting and said he would be giving the structure more consideration and then discuss his plans with Standing Committees.

13. Marquee Offer for 24/25th May

Jane Woolley said that Pat Cooke of the Harwell Feast Committee had offered the use of the Feast Marquee for church use. After some discussion, it was decided not to take up this kind offer. Jane will let Pat know and thank her on PCC's behalf. It was suggested that in future the PCC discuss the possibility of arranging a special service on the Feast weekend, e.g. a Songs of Praise, in the Autumn, to give more time for proper consideration, given the organising resources required.

St Matthew's PCC Meeting.

Nick Clarke joined the Meeting (for item18)

14. **Apologies for Absence**

Were received from Tim Roberts, Pam Rolls, Phil Johnson and Jan Radford.

15. **Decisions between PCC Meetings**

The three months' extension from March 2025 of £150pm support for ECHO was noted.

16. **Minutes of the PCC Meetings**

The Minutes of the Meetings on 15th October and 10th December 2024 were approved and signed.

17. **2024 Annual Report**

The draft of the Harwell Annual Report 2024 was incomplete as page 3 and 10 still needed Jeremy to provide copy, however the rest of the report was approved.

Resolution	That the 2024 Annual Report (as circulated for the meeting) be approved				
Proposed	Adrian Bollon	Seconded	Elizabeth Roberts	Passed	unanimously

18. **2024 Annual Accounts**

Nick Clarke reported in Tim Roberts' absence that the Accounts showed the Restricted Funds had increased, but the General Reserve had reduced. This was not satisfactory because, based on 2024 levels, there were only sufficient funds in the General Reserve to cover two years of expenditure. Tony commented that all but essential buildings work had been delayed. Nick reported the Auditor was satisfied with the Accounts and he was happy to recommend them to the Meeting.

Resolution	That the 2024 Annual Financial Report and Accounts be approved and signed				
Proposed	Stephen Manning	Seconded	Elizabeth Roberts	Passed	unanimously

There were no Income and Expenditure v Budget Report or Fund Balances Report.

19. **Fundraising Committee Report**

Elizabeth Clarke said she had covered most of this in the Combined Meeting but the Meeting should note that the launch would now be delayed until 6th April. There would be a short presentation by Tim, and Rob Thomson had been asked to reflect the situation in his sermon. Elizabeth reminded the meeting that the Treasurer was particularly keen to increase regular giving which provided better opportunities to plan expenditure than one off gifts.

20. **Buildings**

The Meeting thanked the Building Committee and Church Hall Committee for their Reports which were noted.

21. Pastoral Care Report

The Meeting thanked Marilyn Thomas for her Report. They asked if PCC could have a list of the names of the Pastoral Team. Elizabeth said she would pass on this request to Marilyn.

22. Services

Jeremy said there would be a special Maundy Thursday Service, and that details would be on Church notices.

23. Future Dates

The APCM is on the 18th May and the Combined Meeting on 3rd June

24. Any other Business

a) Church Hire for Concerts

Liz said she had raised this item as a forthcoming concert was requiring 15 man hours from their small committee of 6. She questioned whether the Church Office should take bookings and if so, there needs to be more people to help, and the Church needs to consider whether more should be charged for the rent of the church, electricity etc. The Meeting agreed the current situation needed revisiting and asked the group to send a paper to Standing Committee setting out their views.

b) General Synod decision on Safeguarding

Liz raised the decision by the General Synod to keep the supervision of Safeguarding in- house. She asked how our Deanery members voted and Jeremy said he had no information on this. He suggested she write to Helen King, our Deanery Rep. and ask her.

c) Games of Chance

No clear view had emerged on this from PCC enquiries, and it was decided that Standing Committee should try to get some proposed policy on this and then bring it back to PCC. Tony Hughes offered to write a paper on it for SC.

The Meeting closed with the Grace at 10.30 pm