

Minutes of a Meeting of St Matthew's, Harwell PCC
held on line on 10th December 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Revd Jeremy Parsons (Chairman)

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

Apologies were received from:

Jan Radford
Pam Rolls
Phill Johnston

The Chairman opened the meeting in prayer.

1 Terms and Conditions of Church Hall Rental.

These had been previously circulated and the Meeting noted the paper had been approved unanimously.

2 List of Communion Helpers

These had been previously circulated and the Meeting noted the list had been approved unanimously on line by PCC.

3 Income and Expenditure Report and Draft 2025 Budget.

Tim Roberts said he would highlight the important features of the forecast outturn and Budget and then take questions.

Income

The Church Hall income was predicted to rise to £10,102 following the start of the nursery hire which he had assumed for budget purposes to be 1st April 2025. Hopefully other lettings will also benefit from the link with the Village Hall. Hall cleaning and maintenance costs would also rise, but overall there would be a positive gain vs 2024 of about £2,500. Adrian Rance-McGregor asked if the contract was secure and Tim said it was, subject to signature and OFSTED approval. It is subject to a non-refundable advance payment of one month's rent.

Tim showed a list of opportunities to reduce the potential deficit for next year, which included the possibility that the Holiday Club (net cost) is yet to be confirmed for 2025. However, whether it runs or not is no way a financial decision, and there was specifically no recommendation from the Treasurer about not running it. The biggest challenge is that Planned Giving has remained flat while costs have increased.

Tim noted that the budgeted money for a full-time Children and Families Worker did not affect the income and expenditure balance, as it is entirely funded from the Restricted Fund for this purpose, which is still receiving contributions.

Expenditure

In 2024 the 10% Mission Giving is being funded from the Designated Mission Fund rather than from the general income to help reduce the deficit. The goal for 2025 had been to meet it out of general giving. Owing to the state of deficit this would not be possible. (see Action point below)

The Parish Share was set by the Deanery and had been increased by 5%. As mentioned earlier, the Church Hall cleaning, maintenance, and utilities were all budgeted higher due to increased use.

Financial Opportunities

Tim said there were possibilities to reduce the need for the need for a large transfer from Designated Funds:

- a) the Nursery might open earlier in March which would provide extra income, and the higher profile which might result could lead to extra bookings at times when the Nursery was closed.
- b) A decision might be made not to run Holiday Club which, as mentioned above, would save money.
- c) The Mission Giving Fund stood at £16,000 before the £7,000 transfer for 2024, leaving £9,000 which PCC could decide to draw on to meet 50% of 2025 Mission Giving which would save £3,500.

If all this happened it would reduce expenditure by £8,000.

Actions PCC needed to agree

1. There will be a mid-year (end of June) review of the Church's financial position, which will take into account the results of fundraising efforts by that point.
2. PCC needs to advise the Mission Committee that we will have to take 50% for 2025 giving from the Mission Fund.
3. Building Committee should be advised that there should be no financial expenditure over the £6,000 agreed for 2024 and no commitments for 2025 until the end of June.

Tony Hughes commented that it would be easier for the Buildings Committee to reduce expenditure by cutting out one or more items rather than having to work to an arbitrary cut. He mentioned the £1,000 masonry repairs needed before the Quinquennial or the £3,000 for re-rendering of the North Transept which could be left to the second part of the year, but noted that delaying essential repairs could increase costs.

Tim said postponing these items of work would help finances, and while preparations work could be made no commitments should be given until the June review.

Fundraising

Tim said an analysis of the electoral roll had revealed that two thirds of the roll, and 50% of households do not give regularly to the Church. This needs to change and the challenge is that we are not trying to raise money for a specific project, but to raise income for the daily running of the Church.

It has been decided to look at the problem from a Benefice perspective, as both parishes have the same issues. A Fundraising group will meet in January, with the aim of having a financial plan by February, and hopefully by the end of June PCC should get some indication of the outcome.

Tony Hughes suggested that maybe some items of expenditure could be turned into projects for specific giving such a building work, CAP, or Missions. Tim agreed this was an option, although the emphasis must be on Planned Giving, which will enable PCC to make feasible future plans based on more predictable income. Stephen asked that the Group looked at a figure for increased giving and to also convey to the congregation how serious the problem is. Tim said they would be looking at different groups within and beyond the congregation, and that there would accordingly be different means of communicating the position to these groups.

Tony Hughes then proposed that the budget be approved subject to the following changes:

1. That masonry and rendering work could be planned but no commitment made.
2. That PCC should go to the Mission Committee and say 50% of this year's money will come from the Mission Fund.

3. PCC should consider not having a Holiday Club in 2025 unless income matches expenditure. This might be possible by using some money from the CFW Fund. In addition, current contributors to the Fund should be asked whether they would be prepared to have their 2025 contributions re-directed towards the costs should PCC decide to agree to a 2025 Holiday Club.

The revised 2025 Budget was then proposed by Tim Roberts, seconded by Adrian Rance-McGregor and unanimously agreed by PCC subject to a mid-year review of the Church's financial position. At this review a decision will be taken on the timing of remedial building work, holiday club, and progress reported by the Fundraising Group, which PCC approved to be set up.

It was also agreed that the Fundraising Group would bring their proposals to Standing Committee in February before taking any action.

Tim Roberts was thanked for all his work in preparing the accounts and 2025 Budget.

Any other Business

Rebecca Lewis reported that she had consulted her Home Group regarding their attitude towards games of chance and had a mix of negative and positive responses. Elizabeth Clarke reported similar results from her Home Group. PCC members were encouraged to seek wider responses with a view to further discussion at the March PCC.

Action: PCC Members

The Meeting closed with the grace at 9.30pm

Signed.....

Date.....