

Minutes of the Parochial Church Council meeting

Held on Tuesday 12th November 2024 at the Duchy Barn

Present: Peter Wilson (PW), Sharon Sarson (SS), John Reed (JR), Helen Sims (HS), Lynne Al-Sad (LAS), Gabbie Watson (GW), Adrian Beckingsale (AB).

Not present: Roger Berry

In Attendance: Rev Phillip Young (PY)

The Meeting opened with a prayer from PW

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2024 (as amended and circulated) were approved unanimously without further amendment.

Matters Arising: None

2. Safeguarding: Nothing to report regarding a future Safeguarding Officer.

3. Finance Report:

(i) JR had circulated a report on the Quarter 3 Management Accounts, and the overall performance for the year to 30th September was satisfactory with a cumulative 9 month gain on the General Fund of £711, after a somewhat weak result in Quarter 3. The Management Accounts were approved by AB and seconded by LAS.

(ii) JR then turned to the rest of the current 2024 year and the exercise to generate a draft Budget for 2025. A latest forecast for the final position in the 2024 General Fund, had predicted that the General Fund (GF) income was going to reach £130k by 31 December, just above budget. This was dependent upon the Organ rebuild having no material impact on casual giving-income from visitors and festive services. Church Expenses (ex Parish Share) were likely to reach £79k against a budget of £76.8k Most of our spending was going to be under-budget, but the £2.2k overspend largely came from the additional Churchyard costs in 2024, this was due to the excess of costs over and above the income that goes into the Churchyard Fund from Fees, Grants and investment income, and was a direct result of extra mowing and tree maintenance.

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At present, the Parish Share (PS) is still being paid at the Target rate of £49,141, and it seems unlikely that the Aspirational Target of £52,159 will be achievable in 2024.

There was some discussion regarding our ability to make more charitable/mission donations out of GF, and although all agreed it was a worthy approach, JR explained how it was imperative to raise sufficient funds from all sources, to (a) meet our ever increasing costs, (b) pay as much Parish Share as deemed appropriate by the PCC, and (c) retain a sufficient GF Reserve that would meet our obligations in the event of a fundamental need. The latter (c) was defined as about 3 months expenses.

If all these criteria were met, then any excess surplus, would enable the PCC to consider making additional funding by way of donation or project support.

2025 will definitely be a challenge, and the Finance Committee are going to review the Finance team's draft Budget on 3rd December, following which the PCC would be asked to approve the Budget at their January meeting.

4. Organ Progress:

PW gave a review on the progress made in getting the Organ installed and although it was a little behind schedule, Nicholson's were confident that the timelag would be made up. Electrics had been a problematic and expensive issue, otherwise all was going to plan, and it should all be ready for the Christmas Carol Service.

5. Windows:

PW said that the agreed Faculty was still awaiting signature. The Bat Conservation Trust were showing positive signs of co-operation with the potential timing problems of the project. The Architect would be away in March, and the start date has almost certainly got to be moved to April 2025. An Appeal has now gone out to the Electoral Roll and other members, and will be widely publicised in the weeks to come.

6. Children and Families Worker:

Claire Arculus (CA) had circulated a report to the PCC, and it contained a number of different initiatives that she had worked on since the last report. Open The Book was shortly to commence at the School and those involved have been formally registered. CA still needed some volunteers as a 3rd helper with Junior Church. PCC members were very pleased at all the work CA is doing to enhance the profile of our work with children and families.

7. Eco Church:

AB updated the meeting with the challenges faced to identify the criteria for the Silver award. Importantly, it had been professionally confirmed that the Church lighting was LED. It seemed that solar panels to the Church roof were now off the agenda. It had been suggested that to assist the obtaining of our target of a Silver Award, the provision of water butts might help our case, but PW stated that this would need a Faculty, and some expensive work on the downpipes.

8. Muniment Room:

PW and AB had carried out an inspection, and it was evident that the important contents should continue to be preserved, and a careful decision taken to remove unnecessary items. Gary Sandford had been identified as someone, who along with Suzanne, might be able to digitise a lot of the documentation. The PCC agreed this issue should continue to be on the agenda until a decision is taken, which should include H & S issues.

9. Communications/Audio Visual:

SS reported that Marks Tey Radio (MTR) were not able to reduce their earlier quote, which excluding the Oak cabinet would be around £7,000. The purchase of a new laptop had improved some communication aspects, and the electrical improvements have now been carried out as part of the organ project. PW proposed that this item would be re-visited at the next PCC meeting.

10. Any Other Business:

- (a) PW had held a follow up meeting with the Fire Officer, who had identified some areas where emergency lighting could be improved.
- (b) HS put an idea to the meeting to have refreshments provided after the Carol Service. After discussion, PW asked HS if she could put together a plan for the PCC which included reference to H & S issues due to the high concentration of attendees, and includes a cost estimate of around £280.
- (c) The Churchwardens proposed, and the PCC agreed, that the GF would again cover the £1,000 cost of 20 Christmas vouchers at £50 each for the underprivileged children/families, as designated by Dedham School, using Birchwood Farm Shop's generosity.
- (d) JR reported that a legacy of £500 had been received from the Estate of the Late Diana Willcocks, and proposed that this bequest should go towards the Flower Fund, which is currently in need of financial support. The PCC agreed to this proposal.
- (e) PY informed the PCC that he had recently had to curtail the ordination programme for Christina Volkman (CV) with the Benefice. This had resulted in CV writing to the PCC formally expressing her sadness and disappointment at this decision. This letter had not been circulated to the PCC, but some members had separately received personal communications containing thanks for the ongoing support she had received over several years. CV was now progressing her ordination journey within another Diocese, and members felt it was an undoubted loss, as CV had provided active support across the Benefice.
PW was disappointed to read her comments concerning the lack of support, and asked that this be discussed further at the January 14th PCC meeting.
- (f) PLF: PY circulated a paper from Psephizo regarding the Archbishop of Canterbury's views on the subject. PW confirmed that the PCC would meet shortly to discuss PLF. (5th December)

The meeting closed with a prayer.

Next Meeting Tuesday 14th January 2025 at Duchy Barn at 7.30 p.m.

