

Minutes of a Meeting of Harwell PCC
held on Tuesday 10 January 2017 at 7.30pm in St Matthew's, Harwell

Present

Jonathan Mobey (Chair)	Christina Wood	Sid Gale
Jean Barton	Mel Gibson	Frances Taylor
Andrew Keene	Tony Hughes	Gordon Gill
Peter Barclay-Watt (Treasurer)	Hazel Connelly	Michelle Walker
Jane Woolley (Secretary)	Lizi Bowerman	

1. Opening & Prayer

Revd Dr Jonathan Mobey opened the meeting by reading Isaiah 11: 1-9 (“...a new king will arise from among David’s descendants”).

Jonathan commented that this passage contains a prophecy that links the coming of the Messiah with his return, at which the world is put right. This is God’s plan, and the challenge for us is to work out where we fit into it. We should ask for wisdom to guide us. The book of James in the New Testament promises us wisdom if we ask for it.

Jonathan then led the meeting in prayer, including for wisdom.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Juan Bowerman, Pam Rolls and Jan Radford.

3. Minutes of the October 2016 meeting

There were no amendments or corrections. A copy of the minutes was then signed as a correct record.

4. Matters/actions arising not covered elsewhere

Financial giving at services

Action carried over to next meeting: Jean Barton to discuss with Jonathan Mobey about the pros and cons of saying in services that if people are a visitor or give in another way, they should feel free just to pass the collection bag along.

5. Finances

Accounts to 31 December 2016

The Treasurer took PCC members through the (draft) 2016 year end accounts, and offered to answer any queries. There were none.

The headline situation is that we finished the year with a surplus of £1,592 compared to a budgeted deficit of £8,770. This was a result of an increase of c.15% in planned giving plus related additional gift aid. Expenditure has run close to budget, including £20,000 on maintenance costs of the church building. This left general unrestricted reserves at 31 December 2016 of c.£11,500. Further to this, there is c.£90,000 in designated funds.

2017-01-10 St Matthew's PCC – approved minutes

The meeting noted that the accounts are currently provisional and might be subject to some small amendments. Once finalised, they will be sent to the Independent Examiner. After that, they will be formally presented to the PCC for approval at the March meeting.

Resolution	To approve the draft accounts to go to the Independent Examiner				
Moved	Jonathan Mobey	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

The meeting expressed its thanks to Brenda Pyke (Book-keeper) for preparing such clear accounts.

2017 Budget

The Treasurer took PCC members through the proposed 2017 budget, and answered queries.

The headline is that the Finance Committee is proposing a budget in which projected expenditure will exceed projected income by £7,107. However, the unrestricted reserves would rise to c.£16,000 by the end of the year. This is due to our having set aside an unrequired £12,000 to underwrite part of the salary of the Children & Families Worker (C&FW) to August 2017 in case of insufficient fund-raising.

The 2017 budget anticipates a 10% increase on 2016 in planned giving to £62,000. This assumes a combination of additional members and an increase in current giving by existing members.

The 2017 budget assumes church building maintenance costs of £16,180, including £10,000 for internal redecoration. The Finance Committee proposes that work on the extension roof be limited this year to necessary maintenance rather than re-roofing. No provision is made in the general budget for the Heating/Seating project for which there will be separate fundraising.

The Treasurer clarified that the 2017 budget assumes that the C&FW is a full time post. The planned 3 year extension of the C&FW contract is now covered in full by pledges.

Hazel Connelly raised the issue of needing to allow in the 2017 budget for some health and safety related expenditure identified in risk assessments. Hazel estimates the total cost at £1,400.

Peter Barclay-Watt explained that, ideally, the Finance Committee should be notified of any such proposed expenditure by the preceding December so that it can be incorporated into the following year's budget. The Finance Committee then makes its recommendation to the PCC in the proposed budget for the year. In this instance, the Finance Committee will amend the budget during the first quarter of 2017 to accommodate these items.

Action: Hazel Connelly to notify the Finance Committee of the proposed expenditure on various health and safety related matters.

Tony Hughes gave Hazel Connelly some comments about the circumstances in which the Buildings Committee normally gets three quotations before entering into any expenditure.

Tony Hughes asked the PCC to note the following points about building maintenance expenditure in the proposed 2017 budget:

- A delay in re-roofing the extension will almost certainly end up costing us more in total because a) we will have to make any essential repairs in the meantime, and b) the condition of the wood under the felt can only get worse and more of it might then need replacement.

- New information suggests that some items are likely to cost significantly more than originally estimated, namely:
 - The external security improvements to the back door
 - The asbestos survey (which will have to be done before the heating and seating improvement work)

Gordon Gill suggested that it might be more useful if Parish Share expenditure were broken down into Ministry costs, Support costs and Church of the Future costs. Jonathan Mobey pointed out that this is not straightforward to do due to Parish Share being applied at a Benefice not Parish level and the complication of the Deanery subsidy and rebate.

The meeting then passed the following resolution:

Resolution	To approve the proposed 2017 budget.				
Moved	Sid Gale	Seconded	Martin Gibson	Passed	Unanimously

The meeting expressed its thanks to Peter Barclay-Watt for all his work on the finances.

6. Heating & seating improvements

Paper for DAC meeting

Tony Hughes explained that Paper F is intended to be a draft of a paper to go to the DAC (this being the first stage of the approvals process – we need a Certificate from the DAC to apply for a Faculty).

Tony Hughes invited any critical comments on the paper, to maximise its chances of success. Tony explained that the only concern expressed by the bodies we have consulted (Historic England and The Victorian Society) is about the flooring. So the paper tries to counter their concerns.

Gordon Gill said that he knew of a similar application to the DAC from another church which had been rejected because it did not justify the need for improvements in terms of needs and changes in the community. There then ensued some discussion about the extent to which we should justify the need for improvements in terms of enabling wider community usage of the church building as opposed to improving the user experience of the (hopefully growing) congregation. The conclusion reached was that the paper could be strengthened a little by reference to enabling the possible expansion of community usage, but that we have to be clear that this is not our main motivation for the work, and that our aim to retain and attract more congregants via a more comfortable building is perfectly valid.

Action: Tony Hughes to amend the DAC paper to strengthen the arguments for why we need these improvements.

Gordon Gill and Mel Gibson both said that they could not vote in favour of approving the resolution proposed with the paper because whilst they supported (a) seating and (b) heating they had voted in July against the proposal that carpet is the most suitable floor covering under (c).

Resolution	To submit proposals to the Diocese for improving the seating and heating of St Matthew's by a) replacing the remaining pews with Abbey chairs; b) replacing the existing radiant heaters with a new heating system of about 20 electric wall-based radiators; c) replacing the existing nave carpet with a new carpet surface over the whole of the nave and aisles.				
Moved	Jonathan Mobey	Seconded	Martin Gibson	Passed	12 in favour 2 abstentions

Funding

Tony Hughes explained that the estimated cost of the heating and seating improvement work is £90k. We have set aside £60k in designated reserves and we are expecting £20k from the Section 106 agreement for the Blenheim Hill housing development, a total of £80k. We therefore need to raise a further £10k. This could be from a mixture of grant applications to external bodies and fundraising among church members. We will need to show in our Faculty application where all the funding is coming from.

Martin Gibson, Jane Woolley and Jonathan Mobey volunteered to work together on fundraising. Peter Barclay-Watt said that he would be happy to help with raising funds among church members.

Action: Martin Gibson, Jane Woolley and Jonathan Mobey to plan and execute fundraising for the heating and seating improvements.

Mel Gibson advised that some church members are not keen on grants which use National Lottery funding (e.g. Historic England) but that a lot of churches do apply for such grants.

Tony Hughes advised that some grant making bodies will not support improvement works, only maintenance of the fabric.

Mel Gibson advised that he had already detected some interest among church members to sponsor a chair – especially if they could have a name plaque on it. Tony Hughes said it was a good idea to suggest that people sponsor the purchase of a chair, but that he had reservations about name plaques on individual chairs. The knowledge that people had contributed to a collective purchase should be sufficient and avoids any suggestion of 'ownership' of individual chairs.

Venue for Sunday morning services during improvement works

Paper G refers. Jonathan Mobey invited views on the most suitable venue for the main 11am service. A discussion about the pros and cons of the various possible venues ensued. The consensus was that the new village hall is the most suitable.

Jonathan Mobey confirmed that the 8am and evening services could hopefully be held in the chancel.

Resolution	That during a period of improvement works in 2017 the main Sunday morning service of St Matthew's, Harwell is located at Harwell village Hall.				
Moved	Jonathan Mobey	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

7. Church security

Paper H refers. Tony Hughes asked for views on priorities. After some discussion, the meeting gave the Buildings Committee the following steer:

- Improving the external security of the back door and the lone worker alarm are the priorities
- Continue to investigate the roof alarm, in particular the insurance company's attitude towards it
- Do not rule the following items out, but put them on the back burner for the moment: CCTV (internal and external); extra external activated lighting, window grilles
- Take no action on lockable doors for the electrical switch gear.

Action: Tony Hughes to ask David Pyke to liaise with Hazel Connelly over the lone worker alarm (the need for this alarm had also been identified in Hazel's risk assessment work – ref Item 12 of these minutes)

8. Church entrance door/Stringer legacy

Paper I refers. The idea is to replace the internal wooden door and surrounding structure with either one or two sets of double (opening in the middle) glass doors. The value of the legacy should be sufficient to cover the cost.

There was agreement that glass doors would be more welcoming and less austere than the current arrangement. Hazel Connelly pointed out that written comments solicited at last year's Day of Prayer indicated the importance of welcome.

Mel Gibson has seen something similar at St Mary's, Wallingford and was very impressed. They had two sets of double glass doors. Mel reported that St Mary's had had no difficulty with DAC approval.

Jonathan Mobey asked if anyone had any concerns. Tony Hughes said that as far as he was aware the present heavy wooden inner door is not of great antiquity, but there might be an issue over the hinges attached to the masonry, which are said to be medieval.

Jane Woolley asked who would project manage the work. Jonathan explained that we could either ask the Church Architect to project manage the work or we manage it in-house. Jonathan Mobey said that Liz Roberts is happy to be involved. Jonathan asked anyone else who is interested in getting involved to let him know. Mel Gibson said that he would be happy to be involved – for example to ask the company who did the work at St Mary's, Wallingford to come and take a look. Jonathan Mobey said that he had also undertaken some brief searches on the internet for suitable contractors. So far this had revealed another potential contractor.

It was agreed that it would be best to keep this project separate from the heating and seating project, in order not to slow down the latter.

Action: Tony Hughes to ask if anyone on the Buildings Committee is willing to be the link person between the Buildings Committee and the project team.

9. Church Hall management

Church Hall Cleaner agreement

Lizi Bowerman left the meeting for this discussion, as she is married to the proposed cleaner, Juan Bowerman.

The meeting considered the draft agreement (Paper J). The following points were raised:

Hazel Connelly said that she had undertaken a risk assessment of the Hall and identified the risk of Legionella if the Hall is unused for a period of time. So the list of cleaning tasks needs to include something to mitigate this risk.

Action: Hazel Connelly to investigate what would be required to mitigate the risk of Legionella and to propose the wording of the task(s).

Tony Hughes asked for the list of cleaning tasks to include checking the state of the various cupboards (but not the kitchen cupboards).

PCC members confirmed their approval of the Cleaning Agreement with the above two modifications¹.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to relay the required modifications to Brian Zimmerman

Risk assessment for cleaning work

Lizi Bowerman remained absent for this discussion.

At the October 2016 PCC meeting, Jonathan Mobey was actioned to “ensure that a risk assessment is carried out with Juan Bowerman for the [cleaning] work, and actions arising are taken”.

Jonathan Mobey reported that he had not yet carried out this action, and that he would appreciate some more guidance on it.

Jonathan reminded the meeting that the issue is that Juan has revealed openly to quite a few other church members that he suffers from various physical symptoms e.g. problems with his balance. Some PCC members have expressed concern that Juan might be at greater risk during cleaning work than the average person and that this should be taken into account in the specification of the work, or how it is carried out (e.g. perhaps not to use a ladder).

Hazel Connelly explained that it is certainly possible to assess the risks posed by any given job. The starting point could be some kind of confidential self-certification by Juan which he would share and discuss with Brian Zimmerman. Brian Zimmerman and Juan could then agree any additional risks posed by the work for Juan and how to mitigate them.

Hazel Connelly commented that it might also be a good idea if the Hall Cleaner were to be given a lone worker alarm (ref earlier discussion under item 7).

Action: Hazel Connelly to investigate if there is a proforma for an individual to self-assess the risk for them posed by a set of work tasks

¹ Subsequently, the PCC Secretary reminded Jonathan Mobey via an email on 17 January 2017 of the Charity Commission stipulations for such an agreement. These will also need to be incorporated.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to talk to Brian Zimmerman about assessing the risks for Juan Bowerman specifically of the cleaning work.

Lizi Bowerman returned to the meeting at this point.

Finding a Hall Management Committee Chair

Jonathan Mobey reported that he has not made any progress with finding a Chair. At the moment, Jonathan is the PCC's point of contact with Brian Zimmerman (the Hall Manager) and proposes that this remains the case for the time being.

Hall maintenance

Jonathan Mobey reported that Brian is undertaking much of the work required to manage the Hall. Tony Hughes reported that he (Tony) has reduced his involvement in Hall maintenance work, although he did get called out once recently by Brian Zimmerman to clarify the heating system controls.

Mel Gibson said that there is a problem with the front door of the Hall sticking when you try to open it. This also means that the bottom lock doesn't work and that you have to shove the door open with your shoulder. This has been the case for quite a while.

Tony Hughes reported that he had looked at the door with Juan Bowerman recently, since the work done shaving the edge on the door last summer had clearly not solved the problem. Juan had said that he would shave off some more of the wood as a temporary measure. Tony believes that it is on Brian Zimmerman's 'to do list' to get an expert to come in and rectify the problem more fundamentally.

Action: Jonathan Mobey to follow up with Brian Zimmerman about the Hall front door.

An outside play area

Paper M proposes putting up a play area for children on the grass outside the front end of the Hall, particularly for use by the Fledgelings group. Brian Zimmerman is aware of this proposal.

PCC members agreed that they are happy in principle with this proposal, with the following provisos:

- Consult the statutory Fire Officer about whether they have any issue with it (the play area would be outside a Fire Door).
- Consult the Hall's neighbours and gauge any noise concerns. (No concerns are anticipated because Little Pippins children used to play out every day there and there were no complaints).
- Consult other regular users of the Hall and gauge any concerns.

Action: Mel Gibson and Christina Wood to communicate the above to Peter Shields and to liaise with him during the project on the PCC's behalf.

10. Events Policy

Paper K refers.

Resolution	To approve the revised Events Policy				
Moved	Jonathan Mobey	Seconded	-	Passed	Unanimously

Action: Christina Wood to communicate the revisions and the final Policy to Liz Roberts.

11. Buildings Committee Report

The Buildings Committee Report was noted.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Tony Hughes for all his work.

12. Health & Safety

Hazel Connelly reported that Jane Woolley had completed the action from the last PCC meeting to circulate the risk assessments undertaken by Hazel and the list of actions arising.

Hazel reported that she, the churchwardens and the Rector met on 6 December 2016 to go through the list of actions arising from all the risk assessments which Hazel has undertaken. They agreed who would ensure that each action is followed through. Some will involve expenditure – as mentioned earlier under item 5 (Finances). Some of the actions might be things which All Saints', Chilton might want to consider as well.

One key item is the lone worker alarm – as mentioned earlier under item 7 (Church Security).

Other examples of actions required are fire training; the arrangement of the Church Administrator's desk; having an external lock up to store low value items held inside the church but infrequently used (many of these are currently stored behind the organ and in the upstairs walk-in cupboard).

Hazel Connelly also reported that the Church Administrator will keep a copy of all the risk assessment reports. Jonathan Mobey commented that it would be good if these were also put on the church website.

The meeting thanked Hazel for all her work on health and safety and acknowledged the importance of identifying and addressing these issues.

13. Services and seasonal items

Evening service on second Sunday of the month

Jonathan Mobey said that his recommendation was to continue not to hold this service, whilst discussions about the Family Friday initiative are still going on. No one objected to this.

Christmas services/arrangements

There were no comments. Jonathan Mobey invited anyone with any thoughts later to email him.

14. Decisions requested of Standing Committee between meetings

It was noted that the C&FW employment item about which the Standing Committee had been consulted, and the wider PCC informed, would be taken at the next Combined PCC meeting which is on 7 February. This is because staff issues come under the remit of the Combined PCC.

Jean Barton commented that this represents quite a long delay between the issue occurring and discussion of it at PCC. Jean wondered if we should have called an extraordinary Combined PCC meeting sooner to discuss it. Jane Woolley commented that this would have had no immediate impact because of the difficulty of arranging a meeting at short notice at that time of year, and wondered what practical difference waiting until February really makes. Martin Gibson agreed with Jean Barton that we could have met more urgently to discuss the matter.

Jean Barton said that she was also disappointed that the PCCs had not been consulted about the appointment of the assistant on the Science and Faith project. Jean said that she appreciated the fact that the Rector had identified this oversight and had already apologised by email to PCC members about it.

15. Future dates to note

15 January – CAP combined service, St Birinus School

19 January – Science & Faith group restarts

5 February – Christingle service

16. Any other business

None.

The meeting closed at 10.30pm.

CHAIR

SECRETARY

DATE

DATE