

ST MARY'S CHURCH, HADLOW

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Minutes of the PCC Meeting held on Tuesday 23 November 2021

7.30pm in church

1. Prayer and welcome

Members were welcomed by MP, who chaired the meeting. The meeting began with the first half of compline, led by KP.

2. Members present

Michael Payne (MP); John Speed (JS); Cathy Brill (CB); Jenny Hopkins (JH); Richard Hopkinson (RH); Janice Massy (JM), Martin Massy (MM); Kelly Parsons (KP); Lisa Porritt (LP)

Apologies for absence: (NC); Melissa Crawshay-Williams (MW); Kirsty Finch (KF); Mike Harvey (MH); Lee Kirk (LK); Katerina Plucknett-Nixon (KN); Barry Wheeler (BW)

3. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the 20 September PCC meeting and of the 15 November meeting of the Standing Committee (SC) were APPROVED.

4. Matters arising (not otherwise covered by the agenda)

None.

5. Interregnum Update

PCC meetings: MP proposed that the PCC should meet more frequently during the interregnum. The PCC AGREED that the full PCC should meet on the 3rd Monday of each month, starting in January, with Standing Committee meetings held in between, i.e. on the 1st Monday of each month. The January SC meeting would, however, take place on 10 January 2022.

Worship Arrangements, including Home Communion: JS was congratulated for arranging cover for all services up to Christmas; cover for about half of services up to Easter had also been arranged. Home Communion continue, organised by JH.

A vote by PCC members via email after the meeting regarding a service on Sunday 26 December was passed with fifteen votes in favour of cancelling the service, none against. Churchwardens to inform diocese. There would also not be a service on Wednesday 29 December.

Covid Arrangements, Nave Altar & Seating: PCC AGREED that current arrangements should continue, including use of nave altar.

Vicarage: The vicarage was vacated on 21 November. MM had arranged transfer of gas and electricity accounts with Bulb to PCC. The telephone line to be retained – line only – and be diverted to JM as Parish Administrator (Action: JS). The boiler was to be serviced on Friday (POST-MEETING NOTE: The boiler was condemned and will be replaced). LP offered to Hoover once per week.

Technology Arrangements: PCC AGREED that JS's business should take over the church telephone / broadband account and arrange for replacement of the line across the churchyard with fibre, which should eliminate the current problems with connection continually dropping out. PCC would be charged at the wholesale business rate, at cost.

Streaming of services: Services being streamed via Zoom with audio only, which uses the church sound system and gives much better sound quality than using laptop with video. Transmission includes some relevant pictures. The audience is generally 5-10 people; their feedback is that they like the better audio quality but, not surprisingly, miss seeing the service. New cameras for video likely to cost in the range £3,000 - £5,000. RH felt that we should not wait for new vicar to progress actions. PCC AGREED, however, to leave decision on procurement until new vicar is in post; a new incumbent might want to take a different approach.

Sequestration account: MP noted that we would need a sequestration account to handle Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) fees. During an interregnum the PCC is entitled to keep fees for weddings and funerals normally paid to the DBF, as well as usual PCC fees. Such income is used to defray the costs of visiting clergy and extra vicarage expenses. Note, however, that a priest taking a wedding or funeral may claim 80% of the DBF fee (depends on their eligibility). MM noted that we already use a sequestration account for DBF fees.

Appointment Process: There being no Archdeacon of Tonbridge in post the appointment process for a new vicar has been delayed. The new Archdeacon will start mid-January. It seems likely that the parish will have a full-time incumbent, but this will depend on Archdeacon's review of the deanery as a whole. MP is working on a first draft of the parish profile. PCC agreed that we should also seek a wide range of input from church members and village organisations. A Saturday morning would be a good time; 22 January was provisionally agreed. Andrew Axon has offered to facilitate/lead the discussion. Churchwardens to organise. PCC approval for the parish profile is targeted for February 2022.

Charity Commission: Paul White has been removed as trustee. PCC AGREED with MM replacing him as the Charity Commission contact.

6. Archdeacon's Visitation

The Archdeacon's Visitation will take place in January and involve online examination of documents. MP is assembling the various documents; MM to assist with church log.

7. Safeguarding

It turns out advice from the diocese on the role of the Lead Recruiter is very different from what we had envisaged. CB had written a job description, but the requirement appears to be primarily for the Lead Recruiter to make sure that DBS checks on new volunteers are carried out when necessary. Since that overlaps with the role of Safeguarding Officer, CB agreed to also take on the role of Lead Recruiter; she will be supported by NC.

Safeguarding notices in church should be updated. CB to action.

The diocese is recommending the adoption of the Safeguarding Dashboard, which is an app that helps the Safeguarding Officer to ensure full compliance, i.e., not missing anything. CB noted that it would be very helpful. Parishes are being invited individually; the PCC AGREED that we should join when invited.

8. Treasurer's report

Stewardship campaign – Generous Giving: The Treasurer, MM, noted that there had been mixed results for the Stewardship Campaign. Less than half of the 84 forms sent out had been returned, but those that were returned resulted in five new standing orders, 16 increases and five one-off donations.

Current financial position: There was an estimated surplus to the end of October of £12,300 and an estimated outturn for the 2021 financial year of £10,300 (excluding any additional contribution to the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) in 2021, see below).

Interregnum – higher costs: We will experience higher costs from now until a new vicar is in post arising from taking over vicarage utility bills and maintenance, and occasional duty fees paid to visiting clergy.

Restricted Funds: MM proposed returning £15,000 from the Church Improvement Fund (CIF) to the Church Repair Fund (CRF), reversing a move in 2016 when the tower repairs took place. MM also proposed changing the CRF from Restricted to Designated, in line with the original intent (putting aside money each year to pay for future repairs). Both proposals were AGREED unanimously.

Reserves policy: MM proposed a change to the reserves policy from the current aim to maintain free reserves equivalent to 3-6 months of unrestricted expenditure to an approach that takes account of possible financial risks to both income and expenditure (see Treasurer's Report to PCC Nov 2021 for details). PCC AGREED unanimously to maintain free reserves totalling £32,500, of which £20,000 in the General Fund plus £12,500 in the CRF. The reserves policy is to be reviewed annually.

Additional contribution to the diocese in 2021: MM explained that the General Fund was expected to reach about £23,000 at the end of the year, £3,000 more than the agreed reserves level of £20,000. Noting that our current parish offer to the DBF is only two-thirds of the indicative offer calculated by the diocese to cover ministry costs, central overheads and training, etc. (£39,600 offered cf. £61,615 requested) MM proposed making an additional contribution to the diocese in 2021 of half that amount, i.e., £1,500. After discussion, PCC AGREED to contribute an extra £1,500 to the DBF this year.

2022 budget and parish offer: MM invited the PCC to consider the proposed budget for 2022 and important underlying assumptions; estimated expenditure equal to income of £76,000, taking account of adequate reserves at year end and a parish offer of £46,800. The offer is higher than the 2022 indicative offer notified by the diocese (£40,863, capped at 50% of the Average Adjusted Income for 2018–2020), and also higher than the current offer. Assumptions include no lockdown or other constraints affecting our ability to run events; higher vicarage expenses and fees for visiting clergy for the full 12 months; no appointment of choir director/organist. PCC APPROVED the budget and parish offer of £46,800 (£3,900 per month).

Removal of Rev'd Paul White as co-signatory to PCC bank accounts: Noting that Rev'd Paul White is no longer vicar of Hadlow, the PCC RESOLVED that he be removed as co-signatory of PCC accounts at NatWest bank.

Church Fees (Weddings, Funerals etc.) for 2022: JM put forward a note (circulated beforehand) comparing fees charged by St.Mary's for weddings, funerals and church hire with other churches (where available). PCC AGREED fees for 2022 and that fees should be reviewed every November.

9. Sub-committee reports:

Education: PCC NOTED the report of the Education Committee meeting which took place via Zoom on 25 October.

Fabric: PCC NOTED the report of the Fabric Committee meeting held on 2 November. MM proposed replacing thermostats in the nave and Upper Room with modern heating controls (Nest thermostats, with app) at a cost of £795 (Supplier: Castle Heating) – AGREED.

Outreach & Fundraising: JM requested the PCC to run Saturday coffee on 8 January – AGREED.

World Mission: The WMC had been disbanded by Paul White. It was proposed that it should be renamed as the "Mission Committee", initially to focus on the management of the Hadlow Foodbank. MP would seek to find a new convenor – AGREED.

Food bank: A new rota of volunteers had started on 1 November. Previous Thursday saw nine or ten families come to the food bank. PCC AGREED that practical decisions on how the food bank should operate could be taken by the food bank team (who were going to meet on Thursday 25 November).

Decisions on eligibility and how that should be implemented would rest with the PCC and would be revisited at the January PCC meeting.

10. Correspondence

None.

11. AOB

Church linen: MP to thank Pat Critchley for her help over many years keeping the church linen clean, pressed and starched, which was much appreciated. We now need a volunteer or volunteers to take over.

12. Confidentiality

Items on Food Bank and Church Fees

13. Dates of next PCC meetings:

Standing Committee 10 January 2022 (Zoom)

PCC 17 January 2022 (in church)

The meeting closed with the second half of Compline.

Signature

Date: