

Minutes of Meeting 04/2020 of the PCC held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm by Zoom

### **Present**

Rev Derek Chandler (DC), Rev Leonard Onugha (LO), Bob Abel (BA) (Treasurer); Mark Burton (MB) (Churchwarden), Felicity Chapman (FC), Richard Cunningham (RC) (Asst Churchwarden), Susie Downer (SD), Wendy Howell (WH), David Howell (DH) ( Churchwarden), Roger Moore (RM) (Secretary)

### **Agenda Item 1 - Welcome and Prayers**

David Howell opened the meeting with a reading from “The Long View” a poem by St Oscar Romero highlighting encouragement, comfort and faith. Indicating that it helps now and then to step back and take the long view; that the Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision and we accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.

### **Agenda Item 2 - Apologies for Absence**

None

### **Agenda Item 3 - Approval of Minutes 03/2020**

The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 4 - Actions and Matters Arising**

RM reported that there were no outstanding actions. DH explained that the idea of a prayer circle, proposed by Rosemary Weekes, had been parked for the time being.

### **Agenda Item 5 – Health and Safety**

Nothing to report.

### **Agenda Item 6 – Safeguarding**

BA passed on a message from Joy Abel that there were no concerns at the moment.

### **Agenda Item 7 - Finance**

BA outlined his correspondence with the Deanery Treasurer and speaking to notes distributed to PCC members, Annex A, outlined the slightly improved financial position and concluded that St Barnabas would be able to pay its Parish Share in 2021 but would find great difficulty in 2022. BA explained that his assumptions were conservative given the varying government and expert predictions about when and if ‘normality’ may return in 2021.

### **Agenda Item 8 – Ministerial Support – Rev Onugha’s TOR**

DC circulated a draft set of TORs shortly before the meeting. These had been discussed and agreed with LO. Although there had been little time for members to look at them in detail; it was established that they were comprehensive and recognise a training element for LO.

### **Agenda item 9 – Risk Assessments – Opening St Barnabas for Public Worship**

DH reported that following the occasion when he and Leonard had been in church and moved chairs to create aisles and a trial arrangement. He had subsequently removed chairs and created a completely new layout with a central aisle and two side aisles. He felt now that there was the potential to have up to 60 people in church.

DH explained his frustration with the ever changing and complex guidance issued by the Church of England for the construction of risk assessments.

Having surveyed members, DH was of the view that there was potential to have services on Wednesday and on Sunday at 8am and 9.30am.

RM asked if the use of a booking system for attendance was being considered. After discussion it was felt that there would be sufficient capacity to avoid the bureaucracy of such a system. FC suggested that the Parish Centre could be used as overflow capacity if required. This was noted.

DH summed up by indicating he would be pressing ahead with producing the risk assessment and linked operational rules and guidance for sidesmen, churchwardens and others.

### **Agenda item 10 – Future Church Services**

RM hoped that with the proposed move back into church, those unable, because of illness or infirmity, or unwilling, because of the risks associated with Covid 19, were not disenfranchised. He felt it important that St Barnabas continued to broadcast to members and the wider community.

MB noted that it was Diocesan policy to engage with the unchurched through virtual services.

MB outlined the issue associated with the need to have an ethernet cable from the Parish Office to the front of the church to provide an effective wifi signal. No finance is involved as Mark had purchased the cables. To avoid the need for a faculty the cable would not be fixed to the structure. This had been agreed by Standing Committee.

PCC confirmed this decision and agreed that trials should be carried out in order to deploy more modern equipment with connections that were not compatible with ethernet.

### **Agenda item 11 – Legacy Policy**

RM explained that following the last meeting he had drafted and circulated a Legacy Policy for review and agreement. Not all members were happy that the Policy provided sufficient constraint on the use of funds left in legacies. Strong views were expressed that legacies should not be used to supplement running costs eg Parish Share. Following discussion which included the difficulties of including very specific bequests and the necessity of setting up restricted funds it was agreed that a public facing document should be produced in the first instance, this would highlight the importance of people and ministry and avoiding the concrete, such as chalices and choir robes.

Action DC and RM

### **Agenda item 12 – Diocesan Update**

MB outlined documents which addressed issues such as bullying and the need for good practice. Unfortunately, these had not been circulated to PCC Members. RM apologised and said he would circulate immediately and put on the agenda for the next meeting.

### **Agenda Item 13– Potential Conflicts of Interest**

DH outlined his concerns following perusal of recent Charity Commission Guidance which had been circulated to PCC members.

There was general consensus, after discussion, that MB and RM, who both were members of Parish Share Committee and in the case of MB, Deanery Treasurer, had potential conflicts of interest.

After much discussion of the hierarchical nature of church governance, it was decided there was not a simple method to address the issue. It was agreed that members should declare an interest where appropriate.

[ Sec Note:FC provided a sample policy statement at Annex B ]

### **Agenda Item 14 - Communication – Letter from Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy**

RM informed the meeting that he had received a letter from DBE&IS asking if we were ready for new rules for business with the EU. The letter had a strap line: “changes can take longer than you think, so start today”. SD said she had also received a missive for her choir.

### **Agenda Item 15 - Any other business**

DH informed that he had received a suggestion from Jon Barclay that St Barnabas should offer the local surgery the use of the Hall for the Covid 19 vaccination programme. The idea had some support but DH, who had already volunteered to help as a marshal, felt the Local Authority building opposite the surgery would be a more sensible venue. Notwithstanding some potential difficulties, it was decided that Jon should make an offer to the surgery as a gesture of support.

It was decided that a PCC meeting before February was not needed. RM reminded members of the need to start thinking about their annual reports.

DH reported that Ken Heale had expressed his thanks to Mark and Debbie for the services over the last few months.

DC expressed his thanks to everyone on the PCC for the work that had been done during his absence and welcomed the ministerial support of Revd. Leonard Onugha provided at this time.

### **Closing Prayer**

LO closed the meeting with a prayer.

## ANNEX A

### Finance note for 24 Nov 2020 PCC

- Recent correspondence with the Deanery treasurer about Parish Share, and the new version of the 2021 Share (draft 3), have made it necessary for me to revisit my forecast outcome for 2020 and 2021.
- In April I was forecasting that we would end 2020 with £17,000 in total funds.
- I now think we will have about £25,000 at the end of December plus the £15,000 legacy which we received in August and placed into a Designated Fund.
- The additional £8,000 has come from areas which I could not originally forecast:
  - £2,100 increase in expected regular giving and associated tax receipts (some envelope givers have transferred to PGS/SO giving).
  - £2,700 increase in expected donations (including matched funding through Benevity and a large CAF donation plus gift aided donations against claimed expenses).
  - £900 in wedding and funeral fees.
  - £350 from some limited receipts for Parish Centre and Garden.
  - £2,100 which hadn't been budgeted for income from the Hall, mainly from being able to open in a limited fashion in September-October.
  - £300 less paid than expected to Utilities.
  - But an extra £500 spent on copyright licence (overlooked), web hosting, stationery and CTC Christmas card postage.
- I have created a month by month forecast for 2021 using the "guaranteed" income from PGS, SOs, other credits (including Benevity matched funding) and the associated tax receipts plus the two weddings which are scheduled for Jan-Feb.
- I have assumed contributions from Caversham Park Church only until March. We are warned not to budget for these as a decision on their future should be made soon.
- As a baseline, I have not included income from the Hall, collections in Church (including envelopes), café receipts, or any other donations.
- I have assumed that we will need to pay for items to do with electrical and fire safety, organ maintenance, normal fees and subscriptions, and utilities at a basic level equivalent to that experienced during April to November 2020.
- But there is no provision for emergency maintenance or for any other of our normal running expenditure.
- I have also assumed that we pay the Parish Share at the rate indicated in draft 3 of the Table circulated from the Deanery dated 14 Nov 2020 (£4,917.91 per month).
- With these conditions, we would end 2021 with £4,000 (plus the £15,000 legacy money in the Building Improvement Designated Fund). The total of these is less than the balance we should keep to satisfy the PCC-agreed Reserves Policy.
- Recent announcements about the effectiveness of three vaccines which will be available to the UK Government give some hope that we will be able to return to some sort of normality in 2021.
- However, "officials think restrictions might be relaxed as summer nears, but social distancing is expected to continue while vaccines are rolled out, which will take months" (Times 24 Nov 2020).
- The implication is that while we may be able to re-open the Church and Hall in a COVID-safe fashion, it would not make sense to expect a return to normal income in either until at least the autumn.
- Six groups felt comfortable using the Hall this autumn, two were intending to start after half term but were prevented by the latest lockdown, and all eight are likely to restart as soon as they are permitted. Nine others are waiting for a vaccine to be available or social distancing rules to be relaxed.
- It is probable that we will not open the Hall for children's parties during 2021.

- In Church, it should be possible to accommodate around 40 people in a service of public worship subject to a proper risk assessment, which might allow some recovery in cash collections and other income there.
- It is still not possible to budget with any confidence since there are so many unknowns, but the assumption I have used before, and repeat here, is that receipts in Church and Hall recover to reach 50% of the 2019 levels (say £10k and £9k). These would be offset by the increased expenditure on eg utilities, cleaning and basic maintenance to support the return (say £5k).
- This would leave us with  $£4,000 + £19k - £5k = £18k$  (plus the £15k in a Designated Fund) at the end of 2021.
- However, we cannot get away from the fact that our funds have been depleting at a rate of nearly £2,000 per month, which simply means that at some point in the future, which now appears to be in 2022, we will not be able to meet the Parish Share in full.
- On current projections, therefore, it does look as if we will be able to pay the Share in 2021, though we will need to revisit this throughout the year as conditions change.

Bob Abel  
Treasurer  
24 November 2020

## ANNEX B

### PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST AGATHA'S, ANYTOWN

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

##### Preamble

Those responsible for administering a charity (the 'charity trustees') must act in the best interests of the charity. Amongst other things, that requires them to avoid anything that prevents decisions being taken by reference to other considerations. It also follows that charity trustees need to avoid putting themselves in a position in which their duty to act only in the best interests of the charity could conflict with any personal interest they may have.

This has implications in practice for both individual charity trustees and for the charity trustees collectively:

individual charity trustees must identify and declare any conflict of interest on their part; and

the charity trustees collectively must ensure that they have arrangements in place that enable conflicts of interest to be identified and dealt with effectively.

The early identification of conflicts of interest is therefore key to ensuring that both individual charity trustees and the charity trustees collectively do what is expected of them.

A conflict of interest policy is designed to ensure that the discussions and decisions of the charity trustees are not influenced by any other interests. Its purpose is to make sure that everything that may affect an individual charity trustee's contribution to a decision is identified, dealt with appropriately and recorded. For general guidance to charities, you may find the Charity Commission's guidance on this helpful<sup>1</sup>.

A Parochial Church Council (PCC) is in no different a position in these respects from any other charity. Its charity trustees (ie all the individual members of the PCC) are under a legal obligation to act in its best interests. The church does not, however, operate in a vacuum: both it and its members form an integral part of the life of the community. This can give rise to conflicts of interest for individual members of the PCC where the best interests of the PCC may be at odds with those of other community organizations. And other conflicts of interest may arise from personal or family circumstances.

Where a conflict of interest is not identified and dealt with appropriately, it can result in decisions or actions that are not in the best interests of the PCC and/or which, in the case of interests of a personal kind, can confer an unauthorised benefit on one or more members of the PCC. [See also the Parish Resources *Guidance Note: PCC members and private benefit*<sup>2</sup>]

Conflicts of interest can take many forms. Some will make it inappropriate for the individual to participate in a discussion or decision; others may simply need to be identified and declared, so allowing the individual to continue to contribute their experience and expertise to the matter at hand.

##### Policy

1. This policy applies to all members of the PCC, the Standing Committee and any other committees or working parties set up by the PCC.
2. A conflict of interest is any situation in which a member's personal interests or loyalties could prevent, or could be seen to prevent, the member from making a decision only in the best interests of the PCC. Such a situation may arise either:
  - (a) where there is a potential financial benefit to a member, whether directly or indirectly through a connected person (such as a close family member or business partner); or

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/manage-a-conflict-of-interest-in-your-charity>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.parishresources.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/remunerationguidance.pdf>

- (b) where a member's duty to the PCC may compete with a duty of loyalty he or she owes to another organization or person (eg by virtue of being a trustee or committee member of a body which has an interest in the matter).
3. It is desirable that any conflicts of interest are declared to the Chair of the meeting as soon as the agenda is circulated. They must also be declared at the meeting when the relevant agenda item is reached.
  4. Subject to paragraph 6, where a conflict of interest arises in connection with a personal benefit, the member concerned must withdraw from the meeting and not take part in any discussions relating to it (including discussions for the purpose of obtaining any authority from the Charity Commission that would be required to authorize the benefit – see the *Guidance Note: PCC members and private benefit*).
  5. Subject to paragraph 6, where a conflict of loyalty arises, the PCC will consider what level of participation, if any, is acceptable on the part of the conflicted member, having regard to the duty to act in the best interests of the PCC. However, the normal expectation will be that the conflicted member should withdraw from the meeting during discussion of the item of business in question.
  6. A member need not withdraw from a meeting if his or her interest (whether financial or non-financial) is common to a class of persons and is neither (i) significant nor (ii) substantially greater than the interests of other members of that class.
  7. The existence of a conflict of interest must be recorded in the minutes, together with the decision as to how it should be dealt with.

This policy was adopted by the PCC on XXth Month Year.