**Minutes of virtual PCC Meeting**

**on Tuesday 23rd February 2021 at 7-30pm via Zoom.**

The meeting began at 7-30 with a brief pep talk from the Rector setting the mood of the meeting by giving plenty of reasons to be cheerful, despite the current uncertainty and the challenge of inevitable change ahead. Rev Tim Barnard offered a prayer in similar vein.

1. **Attendance:** The Rector Rev Canon Tim Harper, Rev Tim Barnard, Rev Sue Gill,

Howard Pool, Petrina Clackett,Howard Hughes, Sue Pounce, Clare Atkinson,Clare Samuels, Peter Clackett, Loraine Hollett, Nadia Daly, Sarah Ainsworth-Coles, Graeme Coles, Lucy Hann, Stephen Fitzjohn, Mark Paton, Steve Johnson. [18]

**Apologies:** Louise Baneke; Brenda Woodhead (shortly to step down, her years of support and work as Sacristan much appreciated).

1. **Minutes of previous meetings:** 24th November 2020.

The minutes were accepted by the meeting and signed by the Secretary (as authorised by the Rector at the APCM).

1. **Matters arising not on this agenda.**
2. PCC considered and approved the live streaming developments at St Mary’s.

* GC informed PCC that we have just received an extremely generous donation that would meet the cost of a permanent WIFI installation with fixed cameras and sound in St Mary’s. This would obviate the need for connecting up the laptop each time as at present. They key thing is that we already have the sound working well.
* SP explained there will be a demo in church of sight and sound recording tomorrow morning to develop the technical specifications and give an idea of costs, which will aid selection of provider. Good progress under way.
* SF suggested the video set up might be useful as a security measure though this has not been considered and might not be practicable.
* ND reminded the meeting that care must be taken when filming anyone in the congregation without their prior consent. She also pointed out that there would be insurance implications too of its broader use, for security, say.
* CA suggested that a notice explaining how long filmed material will be kept might cover this: the same applies with Facebooked services, but these are deleted fairly soon after.

1. PCC agreement to closure of both churches for collective worship during February 2021. One objection from SF was considered and duly noted. LHo reminded PCC that sanitising and thorough cleaning of the church furniture and equipment happens after every use of the building.

**PCC agreed to the closure.**

1. Rev Gill Lovell, Parish Development Advisor, was to join the meeting at 8-17 (see item 15).

**4. Correspondence**

**a)** Weekly emails from the diocese concerning the implications of Covid-19 and the changes required by the parish to maintain an effective ministry during the pandemic. Information about other initiatives to involve people in church life, particularly during Lent.

**5. Safeguarding**

a) Review and approval of Safeguarding Policy. This should have happened last September, but was overlooked by SJ. Next review date agreed by PCC as February 2022. CS confirmed that the policy remains in line with the diocesan model and proposed acceptance of the policy.

**PCC approval of policy agreed.**

b) PSO thanked the eleven members of PCC who have returned the Confidential Declaration form and asked others to do so. TH emphasised that this is a legal requirement as PCC is employer of two people.

c) CS reported very positive progress on Safeguarding training and reminded members to send information to her for the training record when completing a module. Any queries about what training is set for specific roles in Parish, please email CS.

d) Archdeacon’s Articles of Enquiry: HH stated that this year Safeguarding was the entire focus of the Articles. SJ reported progress in completing a draft response, with CS confirming that the exercise was helpful in making sure we are where we need to be in Safeguarding. The completed document will be returned to the diocese well before the closing date of 26th March.

**6. Reports from Wardens/Committees**

1. Standing Committee decisions ratified here by PCC.

[i] East window damage at SM: investigative work. See written report.

**PCC agreed to sanction the work.**

[ii] Change of time for SM Sunday service to 10-30am: **accepted by the meeting.**

[iii] 2020 Parish Share report. **Accepted**

[iv] Window chords has an estimated cost of £796 + VAT for the flooring and £400 for the window check. **PCC agreed to the work going ahead**.

1. All Saints: nothing major to report. Fire risk assessment report awaited. PAT test and tree survey results also awaited.
2. St Mary’s: see above and below.

**7. Mission in the Parish**

a) Current and Future Service Formats: we need to continue with “mixed economy” delivery of services for the foreseeable future. Need to provide for the future thus, and streaming also improves access to ministry. It also offers an opportunity to link with care homes, as well as parishioners in their own homes, so we must keep it going alongside actual attended services. There is evidence that our online presence is reaching people who had lost touch with church.

b) Charitable Giving Committee report: nothing to report this time.

c)Update on re-design to create a Parish Website. LHa had circulated a written progress report with screen shots of new site. Brief discussion took place:

* GC asked whether we are paying a retainer for the future maintenance of the site: other than covering the initial cost of setting up; this remains unclear.
* SF was concerned that users should have direct access to the site’s pages and not be routed via Facebook, as the services are. It was confirmed that people will have direct access.
* The small print and positioning of the safeguarding information were queried by SJ.

Thanks to Lucy and others involved were heartily expressed.

d) Likelihood of events like the fete going ahead?

* LHo said that the only possible Saturday in June would not be feasible for a fete, but it might be possible to run a weekly book stall, with a plant sale alongside from midsummer, if the lockdown release goes to plan.
* SF wondered whether it would be possible to have some event to mark the end of lockdown, albeit the tentative schedule currently has this as a Monday.
* CA asked if Heritage Day is to happen, and if so, it offered an opportunity to open the church and invite visitors inside. A celebratory service might be held in the morning, streamed, of course.
* Both these suggestions will be considered nearer the time.
* AS plans to have a plant stall in the church later in the year when the building becomes more available.
* Lent and Holy Week services. Watch this space – if it’s safe to open, we will. However, the Diocese is unlikely to let us open before Easter.
* TB said that the ‘Come and See’ Lent Course is underway – 850 folk from across the diocese involved so far. Impressive materials and outcomes and there’s still time to join up.
* The ‘Authorised Preachers’ course: we have three candidates which is very encouraging. TB asked PCC members to support our friends in this venture.

**8. Finance** **-** Report from the Treasurer. Thanks to GC for his report.

1. Update on 2020 and the position so far in 2021. The Treasurer had submitted a meticulous interim written report, which he summarised. Third lockdown has affected planned income/expenditure. End of year figures are coming together. Mandate cheque signers – thank you but it will be a faff. Good box is now bringing in money at both churches and fast becoming an important part of income; it has paid for the machines already. Pensions and payments to employed workers all being sorted, if not already done.
2. Questions to the Treasurer are always welcome on this or any other matter.
3. Operational costs daily are already a source of worry hence GC cannot recommend progressing with Child Family Worker; just not possible at the moment. Wardens and Treasurer to plan how this can be funded in prevailing straitened circumstances.

**Clergy and wardens recommend that given the pandemic**

**we are no further on and that the item again be deferred**.

**PCC concurred.**

1. ND asked about our investment management, saying we should be following a decarbonising bent,
2. SP was concerned that as employers we need to make sure contracts are safely kept: they are in the safe in the vestry, not in parish office.
3. Thanks to GC and PC. TH expressed the meeting’s thanks for their work, which confirms there is a way ahead which will be better.

**9. Fabric and Property**

a) Roof Alarm quotes and PCC consent for Faculty / Archdeacon’s consent as appropriate.

**PCC happy to pursue faculty.**

b) Similarly, we need PCC to resolve to submit a consent request for a Faculty or Archdeacon’s approval (as appropriate) for the proposed cameras and streaming equipment at St Mary’s Church. **Approved.**

c) Frost damage report to St Mary’s church. Repairs are in hand.

d) Fire risk assessments reports: AS already done. SM waiting for final report – extinguishers need to be wall mounted at about £140 **Necessary** e**xpenditure agreed**

e) Mark Paton updated PCC on possibilities for marketing the Parish Rooms to boost income. He had submitted a plan for this which was circulated before the meeting. MP summarised the different uses to which the rooms could be put to generate a small income rather than sitting empty. At lockdown release, maybe a lecture series programme, with a small charge to attend. Range of possible subjects and events. This was discussed with notable interest in the promotion of rooms for various uses. Thanks to Mark for the work to maximise the rooms as an asset.

*[Rev Gill Lovell arrived at 8-17pm, and was content to stay in the waiting room until the agenda was finished.]*

**10. Data Protection update.** It is a year since the last GDPR audit. ND to catalogue data storage and use. There have been no breeches or complaints on data handling.

**11. School** **news:** All going well in both schools but numbers of children of ‘key workers’ attending school in lockdown is much higher than last time round. Online learning programmes are being delivered to a high standard, but it is wearing for all concerned.

a) Coleshill: Increased number of key workers’ children attending. Budget looks good this financial year and into next. Discussing reopening fully.

b) St Mary’s: one vacancy for PCC Governor. Key workers’ children: number also greatly increased, but reduced to manageable number by application of Local Authority priorities.

**12. Deanery Synod** **Report**

a) Meeting on 26 Nov: Synod received the prospective outturn for 2020 and the parish share allocations for 2021. Most parishes have done very well during the pandemic though two have received financial support. Deanery financial targets have been met, and overall deanery finance remains strong for 2021. Our own parish share allotment is slightly down.

b) The Bishop and Archdeacon remain concerned at the number of key parishes in the deanery becoming vacant at almost the same time,

c) Synod will meet on 18th March with a report of the many clergy vacancies and appointments in the deanery, to share good **practice** in lockdown, and encourage each other.

**13**. **Almshouses**

**HH r**eport circulated to PCC members before the meeting; nothing further to report.

**14. Other business:** There beingnone, TH handed over to HH as Lay Chair, and to Rev Lovell, and left what might have been his final PCC meeting with typically minimal fuss.

**15. The forthcoming interregnum**

**HH as Lay Chair welcomed Rev Lovell (Bucks Parish Development Advisor).**

*NB: Unlike the meeting a year ago, which was separate from, and took place after, a PCC meeting, this was an item on the PCC agenda. I have therefore tried to minute what was said, but I reinforce last year’s notes’ proviso about accurate reporting of these complicated discussions. SJ*

Rev Lovell said she would **r**ecap the meeting in February 2020, but the PCC’s questions didn’t actually give her chance to do much recapping. Her prime concern was to emphasise that she is here to help us through the with whole process from before TH leaves, through preparation and selection, and to support the transition for the parish and for the new incumbent. She offered a prayer for God’s guidance, that we make a smooth transition from a wonderful ending to the celebration of a new start. This will take between nine months and a year and involve separate meetings for different parts of the process.

1. The Wardens explained the Parish Profile developments.
2. PCC members had noted the current diocesan policy is to extend interregna beyond one year in order to make money by letting out vacant Rectories. CA queried this policy, especially in a parish that pays Parish Share on time and in full. Rev Lovell: insisted that the process of appointment cannot be accomplished in less that than six months and the law says that no-one can legally let a property for less than six months. Diocese policy stands but will not slow the process.
3. SF said it is wrong for the diocese to do this and to take this long; we need to push for change: nine months is longer than any other organisation would take to make an appointment. Rev Lovell answered that this would need to be taken up with the Diocesan Secretary or Bishop, but she repeated that we can’t do it in less than six months. She elaborated: majority of time is used for advertising, short listing, interviewing, and that priests have to give three months’ notice in current post. There are other consultations and preparations too. Surveyors will assess the property before TH leaves. Any work needed will be done as promptly as possible, depending on the seriousness – if serious, it might not be feasible to let the Rectory anyway.
4. SAC feared the cumulative drag on the process if other things take more time, as is likely. It makes the parish a less attractive prospect to an incoming priest if we can’t offer accommodation. We might lose a prime candidate. Support from CS on this. Rev Lovell defended the diocese method and timing as best she could, but reminded the meeting that she is “on our side…. putting our side of the argument” in any event.
5. SP went briefly through the consultation papers as preparation for drawing up the parish profile. Tentative timeline and key dates outlined. Rev Lovell said several vacancies exist in Amersham Deanery currently and we can get process underway sooner than others with bishop’s permission. Thank you. Rev Lovell take SP papers and give a view when properly looked through.

**SP to be principal liaison and contact point throughout –**

**PCC would be happy for that arrangement**.

1. Concern expressed that the timeline and target times for specific stages might not be possible. Rev Lovell says timetable is bound to change - flexibility will be needed, especially in view of other benefices’ vacancies. Discussion of purpose of necessary meetings and who will be involved.
2. Writing team has been created; Martin P to work on layout and presentation, based on existing (2013) documents. Rev Lovell urged us to get photos in the document of people rather than buildings – but that can’t be done with a closed church and there would need to have permissions from anyone identifiable in any image in the portfolio, which might be half the congregation.
3. Given the exceptional circumstances of the Rector being granted three months’ paid leave *in lieu* of Sabbatical May to July 2021, the Bishop and Archdeacon confirmed at the Bucks Area Deans’ meeting on Jan 28th that the vacancy in Amersham with Coleshill will be deemed to commence from 13th April when the Rector moves out, rather than August 1st when he legally leaves office.
4. Given current restrictions and uncertainties it is proposed that the Rector return for a farewell of some kind on Sunday 4th July, but who knows how the pandemic will progress?
5. PCC also noted the **ongoing strong position** of the parish in clergy staffing - two NSM priests, a Reader, the promise of help from a former Reader, and from Canon Alan Mustoe, a retired priest now resident in the parish.
6. Rev Lovell is happy to return for further meetings when needed; she repeated that her support is with our efforts to find the suitable candidate. National trend is more clergy applying than there were 18 months ago; we shouldn’t need to readvertise because this is “a plum post” and will attract good candidates and lots of interest.
7. TB asked what the diocese feels about a possible joint appointment of married clergy on a job share basis. There would be no diocese objection if this was the parish’s preferred solution.

**16. Dates of 2021 meetings**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PCC** | **All Saints** | **St Mary’s** |
|  |  |  |
| APCM 25th April followed by very brief PCC meeting to set committees | | |
| 22nd June | 2nd June | *When necessary* |
| 14th September | 7th September |  |
| 23rd November |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Rev Tim closed the meeting with a prayer in appreciation of our Rector’s over 24 years of service in the parish. We ask for Holy Spirit to provide us with patience and wisdom in choosing his successor, in Jesus’s name. Amen.

I failed to note the time we finished.

SJ

26th February 2021.