

MINUTES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT CHURCH ON WEDNESDAY 2ND NOVEMBER 2022

The meeting opened with prayer

Present

Rev Iain Ballard, Graham Collins, Trevor Pethick, Shirley Dumper, David Dumper, Sheila Brown, Jan Grant, Brenda Birnie, Penny Brain, Mike Ledgard, Steve Farmery, Gillian Edwards, David Loader, Deacon Jane Mills, Rev Jim Dobson, Sue Rimmer, Alan Cumming, together with a warm welcome to the meeting our three friends from Henley, Andrew Steele, James Steele & Margaret Blakemore –20 attendees

Apologies

Colette Inman, Janet Mee, Liz Walker, Lim Ho, Evelyn Ho & Kath Fraser—6 total

Ratification of the minutes of the previous two Church Council meetings

The minutes of the Church Council meetings held on Tuesday 7th June 2022 and also on Thursday 21st July 2022 were both signed by Iain as a correct record with no amendments required to either minutes. David Dumper proposed and Gill Edwards seconded.

Welcome

Iain welcomed all to the first Church Council meeting for the One Church worshipping on two sites. A particular welcome to Deacon Jane and our Henley friends. Importantly this is the first meeting of the new Trustee Body.

David Dumper asked whom from Henley Church will be appointed as trustees for the extended Church Council. This is important as David has to advise the charity commission of any changes to the individual details of the appointed trustees of the Church Council.

Iain added that there needs to be a joint general Church meeting held in due course to confirm appointments before David advises the charity commission.

Marriage Registration—Jane

Action from previous minutes. The meeting needs to minute that:

Warwickshire County Council need to be advised of Audrey's retirement and the appointment of Jane to conduct marriages, including single sex marriages.

The Church Council formally approved this with Graham Collins proposing this motion which was seconded by David Loader.

STRUCTURE OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH

Iain stated that CPD states that the leadership team of the Church are the Church Stewards as well as the ministers. The Stewards and Ministers are able to appoint and co-opt others as and when required where individual specialisms and knowledge is valuable ie in the areas of finance, property, pastoral etc.

The charity commission rules state that the individual appointed members of the Church Council are the managing trustees of the Church.

Jane advised us that Kath Fraser has asked to be relieved of all Church duties with immediate effect. Iain reminded us of the many roles that Kath has been involved with over many years and that we are extremely grateful to her for her service and devotion. We will ask Colette to send Kath a thank you letter.

WORSHIP STEWARD ROLES

Kath was key in opening up the Church on a Sunday morning and fulfilling a significant part of the role of a worship steward.

CPD states the role of Church Stewards is to enable and encourage as well as doing roles in the running of the Church. We are conscious that the Church Steward Team have a lot of responsibilities and one way to ease some pressure would be to create a team of Worship Stewards.

The responsibility of the Worship Stewards would be oversee the running of a Sunday Service, including, setting up the Church, meet and greet, door stewards, assisting the preacher etc etc.

Kath had started to progress these roles and had discussed with several people.

Trevor added that this structure works well at Kenilworth and was set up three/fours years ago. He added that different roles suit different people and that not everyone wants to be too involved with committees etc. If implemented he stated that at the outset the current Church Stewards may need to be involved with both roles before 'stepping back' as the Worship Steward roles develop.

Jim added that these roles had worked well at his previous Churches, similar structures are also in place at Dale Street.

The Church Council agreed that the Church Stewards progress with plans to develop the Worship Steward Role and to develop a job description. Iain urged us to use Circuit expertise and experience. Brenda added that we need to inform the congregation at all stages of our plans.

Additional items from the Church Stewards

Jim suggested that we re-introduce the passing round and dedication of offertory plates at services—Iain added there is no reason now for not doing this—ie Covid issues etc.

Jim proposed that a second Church Steward be formally appointed to the Resources Committee. Jan is the Church Steward rep on Resources. This was agreed by the Church Council. Jim will take on this role

Key Church Roles and time in service

David is entering his 21st year as Treasurer. He was keen to retire three years ago but given the lack of a successor he has continued in the role through the challenging times of Covid and financial issues. Iain confirmed that he has accepted David's resignation to retire as Treasurer on 31/8/2023 and that he will definitely not allow David to continue in this role after that date. We cannot operate as a Church if we have no Treasurer appointed as at 1/9/2023.

Both Trevor and Iain confirmed that along with CPD guidelines that we must accept time plans for people appointed to key roles in the Church and stick to those commitments so that people know clearly when their time in office will end.

There can be too many who are 'stuck with their roles' and this situation does not help to obtain new volunteers for these key roles.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

David stated that the Church Council needs to adopt and formally approve the financial statements of Stratford Church—stand alone—for y/e 31/8/2022 in order these financial statements can then progress to be independently examined.

Sheila Brown formally proposed that the Church Council approves the financial statements for y/e 31/8/2022 and this was seconded by David Loader.

SUCCESSION PLANS FOR CHURCH TREASURER AND CHURCH SECRETARY

Church Treasurer

David stated that the Church Treasurer role has grown significantly over the last 21 years.

The Church Treasurer is required to attend Church Council, Resources and well as Circuit Meetings which is a commitment that may restrict certain people to consider the role. However elements of the Treasurer role can be broken down and taken on board by additional Church members whom do not need to be accountants—such roles could include banking of monies---book keeping roles-etc etc.

Iain Stated that in some Circuit Churches that the full Treasurer role is split amongst several people whom support the Treasurer. Jane added that she also has seen this has been adopted by several Churches.

Church Secretary

This vacant position is becoming a concern and is urgent

Margaret Smith was our Church Secretary and she sadly died in the spring of 2020. It is now close to three years since we had a Church Secretary

David in 2020 stepped in to act as 'temporary' Church Secretary to act as well as Church Treasurer with a special minute confirming this to our bankers HSBC. However this situation cannot go on as HSBC require our banking mandate to appoint and confirm the three separate appointments of 1] Chairperson 2] Treasurer 3] Secretary .

Progress

The Church Leadership Team assisted by David will look at the job roles for both Church Treasurer and Church Secretary and to approach/appeal to people in due course.

Iain reminded us to use share best practice with Church Treasurers of the Circuit Churches and also to discuss with the Circuit Treasurer.

CHURCH FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND POSITION

In summary three years ago before Covid the Church had a surplus of 70k with annual hire and lettings income of circa 45k pa. With the impact of Covid we

had no hire income for 18 months and whilst bookings are continuing to steadily improve our hire income is currently 27k pa

Following meetings with Audrey in 2020 the Church continued to pay Naomi and Colette and not to adopt the furlough scheme.

Our reserves have now reduced to 18k and we need to make our quarterly Circuit Assessment payment of 11k on December 1st 2022. Therefore this leaves reserves of a fragile 7k.

In addition we have increasing energy usage charges. We have been with Good Energy since 2016 with whom we have a good working relationship. Our fixed tariff was due to finish in December 2021 and this was extended to August 2022. However on current estimates our energy bill is set to increase from 4.5k pa to 14k pa---we are hopeful that as we are a business customer with Good Energy as well as being classed as a business customer with HSBC that the Church may receive a 50% rebate on energy costs over the winter—but this a big but at the moment.

Iain stated that without the income of £6,500 from the Gift Day appeal in Autumn 2021 our deficit of 6.6k would have been circa 13k.

Iain stated that if our Church becomes insolvent that it will go into special measures and cease to function as a Church in our own right. We would need to rely upon one of the Circuit Churches taking over the responsibility for the running of the Church—not an easy sell to the other Circuit Churches.

The situation was highlighted this week when we had a quote from Paul Hunt Electrical to replace lights around the premises at a cost of £700 + which has been deferred.

THINK TANK

Further to discussions at Resources David has started to set up a team to review our full financial position and to seek to return the Church to a solvent and viable position. David has approached three key people and we are grateful that all three will join the Think Tank being Andrew Steele together with Steve Peacop and Phil Ledgard whom are qualified accountants. The team will meet shortly. A discussion then took place regarding the appointment of a Church Steward to join the Think Tank. Jim was appointed to join the group

EGM –SUNDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

The Church Council formally approved the EGM discussed at Resources to be held after the morning service on 20th November to inform the congregation of the delicate financial position of the Church and that we are seeking additional giving where possible from people. Iain will take the lead presentation and will be probably supported by others including Jane, David and Jim etc and as when required. We have 93 members at Stratford together with 8 from Henley-101 total.

David in recent weeks has analysed the giving for Stratford---There are 53 regular donors—including couples etc—averaging giving of £490 pa per member and 6 people using envelopes with an average giving of £488 pa.

David is concerned that approx. 30 members of the Church are not regularly giving and that the cash offertory donations is low at only 2.8k pa

Many people in the Church may not know in detail of our delicate financial position. Maybe using the pastoral contact details that we have could inform people whom we do not regular see at Church.

Graham added that we should stress that giving should also include the giving of time as we try as set up a Task Team again. Importantly apart from developing team friendships we may be able to reduce our Church maintenance costs—eg minor decorating, cleaning windows, garden upkeep etc etc

FINANCIAL ACTION PLAN—IAIN

Iain identified four key outline items which he strongly considers we need to make now with implementation and details to be progressed

1] Naomi

Naomi has unfortunately been ill and has had time off as our Wesley Worker but is back working with Wesleys. However she has offered going forward to work as a volunteer, she is conscious that she has to rely upon the Wesley Volunteer staff team. Her salary is circa 4k pa. See below for further details

2] Cleaning

Our cleaning bill with Goldhill Contracting is 11k pa. David and Shirley have cut this back as much as they are able from 12.5k pa.

The aim is to save 5k pa on cleaning costs. However Goldhill increased their prices by 15% on April 1st 2022 and there was no room for negotiation.

We have tried to cut our hours further with Goldhill, however they have told us that they will not do this. If we wish to cut our hours further then we have been told we must find an alternative cleaning supplier.

Shirley added that the premises need competent cleaning daily to ensure that all is tidy and in order for Church and hire groups.

The other three main Circuit Churches use cleaning companies whom we understand are more flexible in meeting requirements.

We will look into change cleaning suppliers. Shirley, David and others will progress enquiries with the Circuit and also local cleaning suppliers. The Resources Committee will progress. Given that we are seeking to reduce the cleaning bill by over 40% then if we are able to set up a task team, Church members may have to pick up some of these cleaning duties.

The cost savings would kick in gradually and there would probably be a notice period with Goldhill.

The meeting agreed to progress with the aim to reduce our cleaning costs ideally by 5k pa -proposed by Sheila and seconded by Jan

3] Financial Appeal

Iain shared with us the comparison of average weekly giving amongst the four main circuit churches

CHURCH	OFFERTORY PER MEMBER PER YEAR	PER MEMBER PER WEEK
1]	£508	£9.77
2]	£427	£8.21
3]	£394	£7.57
4]	£322	£6.19

Stratford Church is no 4. The challenge is to seek an increase in the average giving per member by £2 per week- to £8.19 or £8/£10 per month.

Clearly the Church members are a wide cross section of people and to many this will be a difficult challenge. In addition it will take time but hopefully shortly some progress will be seen.

The other three Circuit Churches have made annual appeals to their members to gradually increase their individual giving each year. Given our strong

financial position after the refurbishment programme from 2014 until 2019 we did not need to do this so to some extent this is 'catch up' time.

We may need to assist donors in how to increase their giving via on line banking or S/O etc.

4] Purchase of a Battery to the existing system PV System

Currently we are only able to export 47% of the electricity which we produce via our solar panels into the grid. If we were able to install a battery this would essentially enable us to store more of the energy we produce and would increase our export of electricity to circa 70%. Given the increasing price of electricity it is estimated that the payback time would be in the region of three or four years. There are various options for the purchase of the battery and Lim has contacted three of his regular contacts to assess and take enquiries further. Costs vary around 10k is a ballpark figure.

Clearly the Church cannot afford this outlay, however:

- 1] The Circuit Eco Fund has funds which could enable us to have a grant of 25% of the cost.
- 2] The Circuit Leadership Team meet on 30th November and would consider a loan of 65% of the cost
- 3] Stratford Church at the outset it is envisaged would need to find circa 10% of the total cost.

The proposal demonstrates the commitment from the Circuit to support us.

Therefore we need to make a formal application to the Circuit Meeting on 30th November. Graham and Lim are meeting with a potential supplier and installer on 9th November. Graham and Lim will shortly compile a formal application to the Circuit Meeting via Iain.

Not surprisingly these items are in high demand and a waiting list of up to six months is expected. Further and final details etc to be sorted.

The Church Council meeting took on board the above four proposals and agreed that each of the proposals need to be progressed promptly for consideration and action

Line Manager for Naomi and Colette

Audrey was previously their Line Manager. Iain stated that it is a conflict of interests and that it is not appropriate for either Jane or himself to be their line manager. The Church Council needs to appoint a Line Manager. No-one volunteered. David drew up job descriptions for both sometime ago and has also her terms of employment.

Jane volunteered along with David to meet with Naomi to discuss her position on a confidential basis. We are keen to fully support Naomi through any consultation and redundancy process. Iain stated that this approach must be place for one year only.

The Church Council voted unanimously that David and Jane meet with Naomi with a view to entering and progressing her redundancy process. Proposed by Sheila Brown and seconded by Sue Rimmer.

We need to ensure that any redundancy process enables Naomi to continue with Wesleys on a voluntary basis. Care is needed with the minefield of employment law and Iain urged us to discuss and to involve on an ongoing basis in due course the District Employment Officer.

The job role of Colette at Stratford Church has changed over the years. Originally Colette was assistant to Audrey when she was superintendent of the Circuit and when Audrey was no longer superintendent Colette took over the responsibility for Church bookings and lettings. In addition now Colette is employed also by the Circuit. The appointment of a line manager for Colette still needs to be sorted and will be discussed by the Stewards Team.

Duty of Care to employees and ourselves

Colette now has a circuit mobile which will be switched off outside of her working hours. There are several lists of emergency contact numbers posted around the Church and Colette's personal number has been changed to the Circuit mobile and we all need to ensure individually that we have changed the contact number. Colette was being contacted outside of working hours.

A Church e-mail address for lettings will be set up to assist etc.

David confirmed that Church volunteers whilst on the Church premises are covered by our Public Liability Insurance Policy.

With several of us having contact details available this can be a risk. Kenilworth have a contact phone number which is a general Church number and then someone on a weekly rota will divert the call to the appropriate person. We are urged to think about this.

HENLEY—UPDATE

Henley are still waiting to hear about their grant application of 25k under the Warwickshire County Council Scheme for the installation of solar panels—no date has been given for a decision. However given the community use of the building it is felt that this is a strong application.

Andrew was asking about the next steps

Until the outcome of the grant is known then the bank account for Henley Church needs to remain open and operational and cannot be merged into one account..

In the short term both Churches will continue with their meetings and going forward both Churches will probably be responsible for their own property issues—subject to budgets etc. Both Churches have their separate public liability insurance

We will work towards a merger and integration in due course including General Church Meetings

Both Churches are producing individual financial accounts for y/e 31/8/22.

If anyone has any questions regarding progress/ next steps etc then please contact Iain or Jane.

PROPERTY AND RESOURCES REPORT

Steve reported that fortunately we are not aware of any significant imminent expenditure. The front door access we are hopeful is now working correctly.

There are ongoing minor repairs that need attention but where possible expenditure is on hold. The high level valley gutters will probably need cleaning during the winter

Please see further details in the Resources Report which were circulated previously.

David added that in the last 12 months we have spent 10K on general repairs and maintenance, some savings are to be made if we can delay non essential

repairs ie Paul Hunt Electrical discussed above. By law we have to maintain and have serviced etc major items particularly with our hirer responsibilities.

SAFEGUARDING

The Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy for Stratford Methodist Church was updated and approved. Colette will print several copies of the signed policy and these will be posted at various locations in the Church Centre.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LETTINGS ENQUIRY FROM JUST STOP OIL

Jane received this lettings enquiry and brought it to the Church Council for consideration. Although several concerns were raised, it was agreed that Jane should meet with Just Stop Oil and that if she is comfortable with them as a hirer then the hire should progress as long as they understand our conditions etc. As with any hirer, bookings can be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

CARD READER

Jane discussed the need for a Card Reader which can be used for such events as Brunch, Christmas Bazaar and Wesleys etc. Upfront purchase cost is approx. £40. David asked Jane to purchase the most suitable one.

ECO CHAT

The Sanctuary will be open between 10am and 11.30 am on Saturday 12th November—Brunch Day for a prayer vigil for the COP 27 Conference.

WELCOME PARTY

Jane discussed that a group of refugees who are based at the Grosvenor Hotel would like to use our kitchen facilities to enable them to cook their own ethnic food. Fully agreed Jane will oversee

VISIT FROM PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF CONFERENCE

Trevor informed us that the Circuit will receive a visit on March 11th and 12th 2023 and that our Church will be hosting the service. Dates For diary please at this stage.

REV JEONGSOOK KIM

Jeongsook is no moving on next July and the Circuit will apply for a presbyter replacement but if successful this will probably be a probational presbyter which will reduce the level of experience and resources—as training will be required--- in the Circuit.

SUDANESE FAMILY

It is lovely to have the family with us. Jane is going to ask if via googlemail they would like to read a lesson etc in their own language and involve them in services.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 13th February 7.30 PM at Church

Given all of the above if there is an urgent need in the interim for a Church Council meeting then Iain will arrange etc.

The meeting closed with prayer at 9.25 PM.

GRAHAM COLLINS

DEPUTISING FOR COLETTE ---4TH NOVEMBER 2022

