

**MINUTES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING OF STRATFORD WITH HENLEY CHURCH HELD
IN THE NEW ROOM AT STRATFORD ON AVON METHODIST CHURCH ON TUESDAY 24TH
OCTOBER 2023**

1] Welcome

Rev'd Sally Jones said a prayer from the Daily Prayer book and welcomed us all to the meeting.

2] Constitution of the Meeting

Present at meeting--12

David Dumper, Phil Legard, Alan Cumming, Gillian Edwards, Sheila Brown, Jim Dobson, Trevor Pethick, Rev'd Sally Jones, Deacon Jane Mills, Brenda Birnie, Sue Rimmer, Graham Collins.

Apologies--12

Jan Grant, Lim Ho, Evelyn Ho, Janet Mee, Liz Walker, Steve Farmery, David Loader, Andrew Steele, Margaret Blakemore, Mike Ledgard, Kath Fraser, Malcolm Smith

Treasurer

Rev'd Sally thanked David for his diligent work over the last 21 years as Church Treasurer. David added that the most difficult time in the role was the during the Redevelopment Programme in 2013 when a commitment had to be made to finding an additional 150k for the project completion. 150k of loans were received from the congregation with all loans repaid within two years.

Rev'd Sally thanked Phil for taking over as Treasurer from 1st September 2023

3] Minutes of the last meeting held on 19th July 2023

Rev'd Sally signed as a correct record with the following amendment:

Rev'd Sally will chair future Church Council meetings—But will not chair future Resources Committee meetings. Resources will be chaired by Deacon Jane.

The signed copy has been filed in the Vestry

4] Notification of any other business

Issues with Cleaners and also discussion regarding communion coverage on Zoom –see below.

5] Annual Review of the Safeguarding Policy

Previously circulated. Rev'd Sally signed and dated the Policy document with a review date inserted in 12 months time of October 2024. The policy was unanimously adopted by the Church Council at the meeting.

Original document and two copies have been put in the Vestry for Colette to distribute and another signed copy will be given to Adrienne for inclusion on the Church Website.

6] REPORTS

A] RESOURCES

Report previously circulated

1] Progress on merger with Henley

Henley Bank HSBC account now merged it Stratford HSBC Bank account.

The Seaspray Fish and Chip Shop next door is on the market for circa £1 million.

We are in the process of obtaining the Church deeds from the Circuit to confirm our title to the side access. David Dumper stated that the estimated insured cost of replacing the building may need to be increased.

2] Cleaning

AOB--Shirley Dumper advised us today that the cleaners are six days short in the last three weeks in their planned cleaning visits. Shirley has had no contact from Goldhill Contracting and no explanation. The welcome area had to be cleaned at KSN this morning and also emptied waste bins on 25th.

Although the cleaners contracted rate is between £2 and £3 per hour less than other Circuit Churches we do need to ensure that we have a reliable service and contact.

Commercial Cleaning is a 'sideline' for Goldhill and we believe is circa 10% of their turnover.

David Dumper added that we do not have any penalty clauses if we terminate our contract with Goldhill. Admin has become hap hazard—no monthly invoices for June, July and August and then a cumulative invoice was sent in September—hence the spike in cleaning costs in this years' budget.

The Church Council asked Resources to progress and seek quotes from alternative suppliers. David will pass to Phil our current list of requirements and weekly schedules. Phil will then discuss with his Facilities Management Team at work in order to set up a procurement document which can then be given to out to tender to local commercial cleaning companies to quote for consideration etc. One of which will probably be the cleaning business based in Wilmcote whom clean Henley Church.

Graham has purchased a Ewbank carpet sweeper to be stored in the foyer to encourage hirers to clean up in that area. Biscuit crumbs etc.

Jane stressed again that Shirley must give up the role of contact with the cleaners. Shirley has asked for over a year to be released and this is now urgent---we are all asked to consider contacts etc .

3] Finance

Draft accounts to y/e 31/8/2023

Previously circulated. A very positive turnaround from a deficit of £6695 in y/e 8/22 to a surplus of £1747.

The Church Council meeting accepted and adopted the full set of draft accounts for Stratford on Avon Methodist Church—incorporating Henley in Arden Methodist Church-- for the year ending 31st August 2023, subject to independent verification.

Phil will draw up a note for circulation to all-in the notices--explaining our improving financial position and thanking everyone for their continued support etc .

HSBC Banking Daily On line Limits request to increase

Currently with our HSBC Banking Facilities we have in place a £500 daily payment limit which includes all transactions. In certain situations—ie the payment to Supportis this is not ideal.

Therefore the following resolution was carried unanimously at the Church Council Meeting

Request to be made to HSBC Bank for the daily on line banking authorisation limit for the account of Stratford on Avon Methodist Church be increased from the current daily limit of £500 to £3000.

Proposed by Graham Collins and seconded by Sheila Brown

Budgets for the current financial year to 31/8/24

Previously circulated. The budgets were accepted by the Business and Finance Committee at their meeting held last night—23rd October 2023.

Phil sought that the Church Council adopted and accepted the budgets which include actuals for the month of September 2023. Unanimously agreed after the following was discussed:

Alan said that the budget for lettings income was lower than he expected. Phil added that hire is increasing and that this figure is cautious for both Churches. In addition the budget for repairs and maintenance budget has been reduced from 12k to 9.6k, it is hoped that costs can be controlled in this area but not easy in this area.

The budget includes an increase in giving by the congregation of circa 7% during the year-- approx the rate of inflation---this was accepted by the Church Council as part of the overall discussions. An appeal will be made to the congregation in due course, probably at the time of the Gift Day appeal ---see below.

In due course 'a wish list' of property upgrades, maintenance and repairs etc will be drawn up and budgeted for consideration to apply for future grants—Town Trust etc.

4] Property

Previously Circulated--update-the accessible toilet was repaired by Warmington Plumbers on October 25th. The area needs to dry out for 2/3 weeks, before pipework is 'boxed in' and tidied up.

Our Quinquennial Inspection will take place in the current financial year and this together with the Supportis reports may result in unwelcome and unplanned property and allied expenditure—see below.

5] Lettings

Continuing to increase—we are very grateful to the continued hard work of Colette and Jane Collett—no relation!!

Discussions with the Circuit are progressing well regarding Colette's revised employment contract.

6] Risk Assessments---Supportis

James Crosby from Supportis is visiting Stratford Church 10.30 am—12.30 am next wednesday 1st November—Graham and David Dumper will meet with James--additional input widely welcomed. James and Graham will travel to Henley to meet with James Steele as well for around 1pm

£2020 has been paid for the first year of the five year contract.

Supportis will document items that need attention and we will need to consider their recommendations for action, In particular those 'red' traffic light items.

As our relationship develops with Supportis we may gain some of the necessary skills which we need to progress in certain areas ourselves more confidently.

Trevor added that we are 'pioneers' in the Circuit in this area and that he is keen to share our experiences with Circuit Churches in due course. Our need may be greater than others with our large level of hire etc.??

7] Solar PV Battery grant application updates

We have now received 10.5k from Stratford District Council, being a 50% grant towards the cost of two Tesla Powerwall Batteries. The condition of the grant is that the batteries need to be ordered by 31st March 2024

Andrew has completed the application for a further 25% grant from the Circuit --for circa 5k --which we are hopeful will progress---the next Circuit Meeting is on 16th November.

If we are successful with the Circuit Grant the Church will therefore have grants of 75% -- circa 16k towards the overall cost. Our challenge will then be to raise circa 5k from a

congregation. A gift day is proposed to be held during January 2024. In reality the raising of 4.5k plus gift aid should suffice.

The Church Council then unanimously approved the following proposal for Resources:

To place an order for the two Tesla Powerwall Batteries if Stratford Methodist Church is successful upon obtaining confirmation that the grant is available from the Circuit of 25% of the total cost of the batteries and installation.

As Lim has pointed out we need to bear in mind:

a) There will be a lead time with placing the order with Stratford Energy Solutions and delivery and installation.

b) Prices continue to change; ideally we need to place the order sooner rather than later—ie if there was a 5% price increase this will result in a further circa 1k in costs.

Phil added that the Church is able to pay the required 5K up front, pending the proposed Gift Day in January 2024.

Solar Panels—Stratford and Henley

Andrew is continuing to progress the possibility of installing solar panels for Henley with HOECECB which possibly could include a battery as well. Early stages, but we are keen for Andrew to progress. Could possibly involve an interest free loan with savings made repaying the loan, perhaps over a 5 year period etc.

Alan asked what would happen if Henley Church was not viable and closed within the next five years. A good point which will need to be considered when reviewing any prospective loan terms and conditions etc. Andrew will report back to Resources and then to the Church Council in due course for updates and decisions.

Alongside this, Lim is looking at the viability of installing additional solar panels at Stratford, early days and Lim will report back to Resources and then Church Council in due course etc.

B] OUTWORKING OF THE VISION DAY—including setting up a Church Leadership Team

The first draft of the Church Handbook was issued and circulated with the agenda for the Church Council meeting in July.

Phil and Jane are updating the Handbook which also gives the job description of the main roles within the Church and which also sets out guidelines for the Church Leadership Team

A quorate of a minimum of four people is proposed. All Stewards, Treasurer, Resources Secretary and Property Steward [currently vacant] to be included and in due course Church Secretary and maybe others. The meeting stated that the Pastoral Secretary should be added [currently vacant]. Additional roles etc to be invited as and when appropriate issues are discussed etc.

The meeting unanimously adopted the following:

The Leadership Team are to be delegated to act upon expenditure of up to £3000 on any one item which is within the budget and expenditure of up to £1000 per item which is not in the budget.

The Leadership Team should therefore be able to make the majority of financial decisions and expenditure which are required in between Church Council meetings to ensure that the Church 'ticks over' with necessary items attended to promptly etc

Alan stated that the Leadership Team should be effectively a tight team primarily looking at primarily business decisions but have the flexibility to co-opt others as and when required.

David asked Trevor to share how the Circuit Leadership Team works, he stated that it essentially acts an 'executive' in between Circuit Meetings to make decisions etc.

Phil suggested that the Vision Day becomes an annual event to keep ideas fresh etc.

C] MINISTERS REPORT

Sunday 21st January 2024—Covenant Service Inviting Holy Trinity and Henley

As from January Henley will be holding two services per month and they will join us for the other Sundays in the month.

Advent Course—Jane is to pursue and to hopefully launch a course for our Church. We have in the past for Lent Courses joined with Holy Trinity.

Christmas Services

Sunday 17th December---10.30 service and Evening—Carol Service

Sunday 24th—Christmas Eve—10.30 AM and Evening Christingle Service

Monday 25th—Christmas Day—10.30 AM —either Jane or Sally

Forest Church

Jane is launching an after school group in conjunction with Holy Trinity on Wednesday 8th November. Rev'd Jemima Strain will also be involved and hopefully Craig Grocock—Vicar at Shottery St Andrews.

Both Holy Trinity and ourselves have very active pre-school groups, however once children start primary school there are few Christian based activities in the town for them to go to.

The Forest Church will be based in the Church car parks, Holy Trinity Gardens and hopefully in the Dell with permission from RSC.

The project will not be an 'after school club' and will require parents/carers to accompany children. Jane is encouraged by the level of support and interest from a keen number of Wesley's parents.

Forest Church will meet between 4.15 and 5.15 pm on Wednesdays during the school term

We all wish this venture every success.

Maybe an interest for an adult Forest Church in amongst congregations in the above Churches in due course??

Zimbabwe—visit

Jane shared with us her rewarding experiences of her visit over the last two weeks. The Church in Zimbabwe is growing rapidly with a lot of positivity.

Jane is keen to build on her connections in Zimbabwe specifically and Africa in general by holding a meal at Church and building upon these links, particularly for people with connections in the continent.

David Dumper added that some years ago in the previous Stratford and Evesham Circuit that the Circuit Missions Project raised monies for a significant number of solar lamps which were very effective and cheap to purchase. The project was overseen by Mark Boulton. Gill added that we also had a successful toilet twining project involving Church members and that our Church is involved in several missions projects including the Sponsorship Scheme and Shoe Boxes etc.

Trevor will raise a proposal that the Circuit adopts such a 3 year Missions project, co-ordinated by the Circuit. Generally it was felt that the Circuit needs to look at such projects.

D] ITEMS FROM THE STEWARDS

Jim is concerned that currently only Jan and himself are active stewards, together with the considerable number of vacant posts in the Church (see below) Kath and Margaret have stepped back, having temporarily coming out of retirement to assist.

There is a lot of pressure on Jim and Jan which we acknowledge and this a very difficult situation.

On the positive side 16 people have answered an appeal and have come forward to support and help on a Sunday morning. Jim and Jan will shortly hold a meeting with coffee and cake to say thank you and to also work out roles and the best way forward. This increased support will help but we desperately an additional two stewards.

Thanks to Brian Elsdon who is now managing the key holding register, taking over from Liz.

Liz has resigned after 15 years as our Pastoral Secretary. The meeting expressed sincere thanks for her support over the years. Trevor added that this a long time of service in this role. The role requires several meetings per year and liaising with the team of pastoral visitors

Vacancies—key roles

Two Stewards

Two Property Secretaries

Pastoral Secretary

Church Secretary—David Dumper until 31/8/24

We may need to consider outsourcing some roles in due course. The Circuit were going to discuss perhaps some additional support in particular in the area of Church maintenance and property--Graham to follow up.

E] GREEN GROUP

Report previously circulated

F] WESLEYS

Jane and Gill updated that Resources had approved the painting of the inside of the fence with parents help in the play area. Wesleys are fundraising and are also purchasing additional soft toys. There is still a waiting list for Wesleys and all looks positive.

KSN are knitting angels for Wesleys and more are needed, Sue is seeking support from her friends and neighbours to knit as well .

G] PASTORAL

Richard and Karen Hanley unfortunately will not be worshipping with us going forward. Karen no longer works at Cedar Lodge and they live in Redditch.

Please to record that The Boulton's are transferring their membership to ourselves

The funeral for Lorna Light will take place at the Vale Crematorium on 8/11 at 10 am followed by a celebration of her life here at 11.30 am.

Two Iranian Ladies who are based at the Grosvenor have joined us at Brunch and at morning services have requested to be baptised.

We have not seen the Sudanese family now for some time.

H] FROM THE CIRCUIT

Report from Trevor previously circulated

Sheila and Kath attended the Circuit Away Day last Saturday and they found the day very rewarding and they have compiled a report of the day which we discussed –a copy is circulated with these minutes. A key point from Trevor is that the more Churches talk generally about Church growth the more they grow.

It is recommended that we hold a meeting shortly to discuss the ideas raised at the Circuit Away Day

Phil spoke with Rev'd Iain last Sunday and Rebecca is keen to expand and progress singing and music in Church Services and Church events, particularly with this being a key part of our Methodist heritage. Rebecca is busy and she seeks support to develop plans she has going forward.

Rebecca used to organise Singing Spirits and Shotton St Andrews have a community choir.

I] STRATFORD CHURCHES TOGETHER

Jane stated that there are a significant number of Churches in Stratford and that it can be difficult to organise events and progress ideas etc. More people are sought to help with the Street Pastors Programme, together with support at the Fred Winter Centre and lunches for the homeless at URC.

J] EDI TRAINING

EDI---Equality, Diversity and Inclusive

The training programme is being rolled out---it can be done individually via Zoom which takes around two hours or in a group session with discussion—Trevor added that at Kenilworth they have had several enjoyable group sessions to complete the course

Ministers, Local Preachers and Stewards need to complete the course during the first rollout of the programme—Sheila and Trevor have completed, Jim is progressing the course and will ask Jan to progress.

In the second rollout in due course trustees, amongst others, will need to complete EDI training.

K] AOB

A request from Adrienne. On Zoom it can be depressing during communion when the camera does not show communion. Phil added that it is very simple to alter the camera to show communion to those on Zoom.

Reservations were expressed about this—Alan stated that communion is a private experience. There are no GDPR issues. There are only around 4/6 people currently using Zoom.

The meeting unanimously agreed that in future Zoom can show the communion during the Service, however communion services would not be available on YouTube. Proposed by Sheila and seconded by Graham.

L] DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 15th February 2024 7.30 pm at Church

Sally closed the meeting with prayer and shared was shared at 9.35pm

Graham Collins

Church Council Minutes Secretary

26th October 2023

