

Parish of Wimbledon Church Council meeting held on 29th November 2023, St Mary's Garden Hall: minutes

Present: Revds. Mandy Hodgson, Clive Gardner, Nils Bersweden, Stephen Edmonds and Sheila Lenon, Jane Austin, Jane Jefford, Lawrence Davies, Peter Welsh, Elizabeth Ziegler, Willy Varlow, Sally Carter-Esdale, Nick Wolff, Jane Long, Mike Vernell.

Opening Prayer: Revd Nils Bersweden opened with prayer.

Welcome and introduction

Revd Mandy Hodgson (MH) welcomed all to the meeting. She noted the resignation from the PCC of Neal Harvey and Charles Esdale.

Apologies: Catherine Gilonis, Etienne Lambert, Alison Newman, Anthea Richardson.

Conflicts of interest: Jane Austin stated her sister, Karen Humphreys is helping on a paid basis to manage Coombe Gardens as Rachel Rowell was finding the work involved too great for her to deal with alongside her other Parish work.

1. Agreement on how PCC meetings will be minuted: The Rector stated that the current practice of ratifying minutes at the next meeting is unhelpful. Jane Austin will amend the Policy to allow members to comment on the minutes for up to 21 days after the meeting. Any comments are to be shared with all members. Members will have a further seven days to comment. The minutes will then be duly ratified once all members have agreed to the latest version. This amendment was proposed by Revd Stephen Edmonds and Seconded by Revd Clive Gardner. Unanimously agreed.

2. Minutes of 28th June 2023 and 30th August: AGREED with 1 abstention and duly signed.

3. Rector's Report: The last few months have been difficult. PCC members must commit to being kind and supporting one another, behaving like disciples of Christ. Cooperation within the Team must be increased. It matters that we conduct disagreements well. A serious lack of volunteers exists at Team level, with a high turnover of staff and volunteers. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We cannot work without filling the Treasurer roles and without a Secretary. We need a volunteer honorary PCC Treasurer as well as a paid PCC Treasurer and Head of Finance for resilience as a charity. Some have reported hostile and uncooperative working environments, exposing the PCC to possible litigation and contributing to mental health issues and the departure of two PCC Treasurers. Resenting the Team and taking it out on the parish's paid servants and volunteers is not acceptable. The situation has led to increased audit costs for the parish and required an overwhelming amount of the Rector's time being devoted to the Team. The Rector paid tribute to Sam Pedder for her highly appreciated work, her generosity and agreeing to a cut in her hours. We owe her a great deal as she has been the key to keeping the finances together as we've gone through the changes in Treasurers. The churches are at a crossroads and a decision needs to be made (although a split would be painful and costly and not of the Rector's choosing): do the churches want to stay together as a Team or do they want to go their separate ways? If it's to stay together, they need to support one another and be willing to serve. This needs to be an agenda item for the next meeting,

George Kulasingham has been appointed as Head of Finance. The members of the Standing Committee were involved in the appointment process. Well qualified and experienced, he will be paid at the top of the pay band. His start date in the new year is in negotiation. He will work initially four days a week, including two days working from home. It is anticipated that this will fall to three days a week in due course.

4. Budget: the budget for 2024 was considered.

The contributions of the churches are as expected.

Insurance: Elizabeth Ziegler explained that the cost of insurance is an estimate as the negotiation is concluded in December. Costs increased greatly last year and a long-term agreement ends this year. She recommends that if the proposal is for the same level of risk management, and it is in line with the budget, she seeks approval in writing of the Standing Committee in time for the 1st January deadline. If not, she will consult the Standing Committee by email.

Deficits: the churches planning a deficit explained what they are doing about that deficit. Jane Long explained for St John's that the deficit was fixed through an abundance of caution and would be avoided by delaying items that were not required if necessary. Lawrence Davies (St Mary's) noted the loss of generous donors and increased costs due to inflation. Some expenditure will be funded from designated reserves and growing the income from letting the halls. The diocese will be informed that the PSF contribution will be reduced in 2025. Willy Varlow (St Matthew's) stated that most of the large items of capital expenditure on the budget would not necessarily be carried out this year. The organ expenses would be covered by a designed fund. The deficit should not be more than £13,000. A campaign for planned giving is planned for early in the year and hall rents will be increased. Reserves remain healthy. Nick Wolff (St Mark's) explained that there is scope for renting out more spaces. Reserves should cover the small deficit anticipated. Heating work will be postponed until next year.

The budget was proposed by Sally Carter-Esdale, seconded by Jane Long and accepted unanimously.

5. Life Event fees. Only the increase in fees for heating is large, due to inflation. Discretionary fees have been increased at the same rate as the pay of the employees of the parish.

It was proposed to make the charge for clergy travel expenses non-facultative. Proposed: Revd Stephen Edmonds, seconded: Jane Long. Accepted by 11 for, two against, with one abstention.

Marriage documents can be posted on payment of the fee for special delivery or by the couple themselves.

Revd Stephen Edmonds proposed the new fees, seconded by Elizabeth Ziegler. Accepted by 14 votes, with one abstention.

6. Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator Role: the Diocese accepted the parish's role description, changing the title of the role to Co-ordinator and requiring the inclusion of a level of training. The co-ordinator can be a member of the PCC but if not a member, the co-ordinator need only attend the meeting before the parish APM. The revised role was proposed by Willy Varlow and seconded by Jane Long. It was ACCEPTED unanimously. The Rector will approach suitable candidates.

7. Safeguarding

Reports on safeguarding at St John's, St Mark's and St Mary's are available online.

Jane Jefford (St Matthew's) gave a verbal report that there were no incidents to report. Who and what level of checks are required is being investigated. The current safeguarding officer wishes to step down. Her successor will be appointed once trained.

Revd Stephen Edmonds noted that the safeguarding officer of St John's is stepping down and the DCC will appoint her successor.

The Rector expressed thanks to all those who carry out safeguarding roles in the parish.

8. Parish Giving Scheme

Following discussions with Revd Alastair Newman, Gabby Parikh, Director of Giving & Parish Funding for the diocese, has arranged that the individual churches of the parish can join the scheme in their own time. The scheme can be run alongside other forms of giving. The Rector asked that the wardens of churches that join the scheme include their experience and wisdom in their warden's report. The PCC will pass a motion so that individual churches can join the scheme individually and encourages participation in the scheme. Proposed: Jane Jefford, seconded: Sally Carter-Esdale. Accepted unanimously.

9. The Audit Report

The audit is an improvement on the past, a slimmer document. The auditors think that the parish is going in the right direction. In the future, more policies will be required. Whistleblowing and health and safety policies will be required of the PCC.

As this is a parish audit and the PCC is legally responsible for the parish, the policies have to be parish wide.

Elizabeth Ziegler agreed to investigate:

- For the Whistleblowing Policy, what independent body, outside the line of command in the Church, could be included.
- For Health & Safety, in consultation with our insurer, how proportionality can be achieved in risk assessments.
- If the insurer requires further policies.

Where a problem was reported in the audit, it is best to contact the auditor directly.

10. Proposal to employ a Sunday School Director for St Mark's. Nick Wolff spoke in favour of this appointment that will provide a consistent basis for Sunday School provision at modest cost. The appointment will take place when the next vicar is in place. Proposed: Revd Clive Gardner, seconded by Nick Wolff. ACCEPTED unanimously.

11. Reports from the churches. The reports are available to PCC members online. The following matters needed the attention of the PCC:

St John's, Approval of the renewal of the annual rent agreement with the West Wimbledon Dance Academy, proposed by Mike Vernell, seconded by Jane Long. ACCEPTED unanimously

St Mary's. In addition to the report, St Mary's wish to appoint David Billington, new treasurer, as signatory on all bank accounts of the church. Proposed: Lawrence, seconded by Revd Nils Bersweden. ACCEPTED unanimously.

St Mark's. The church wishes to appoint Jenny Alderman as a communion assistant. Proposed: Nick Wolff, seconded by Revd Clive Gardner. ACCEPTED unanimously.

St Matthew's. No items required the attention of the PCC.

12. Reappointment of PCC foundation governors for schools. St Matthew's requests the reappointment of Christian Dingwall, Bishop Gilpin the reappointment for Kristen McFee. Proposed by Willy Varlow, seconded by Lawrence Davies. ACCEPTED unanimously.

The Rector expressed her formal, grateful thanks to all those who serve as governors in the schools of the parish. It is a demanding role that is crucial to maintaining the Christian character of the schools.

13. Parish properties

Reauthorization of the budgets of Arthur Road and Coombe Gardens properties. In addition to the wardens' report on the properties, Jane Austin asked that a revised budget be approved for Coombe Gardens. Budgets have been increased due to continuing work on both properties. For Coombe Gardens, members urged the wardens to accept, for insurance purposes, the higher quote for work on the chimney, as that company will use scaffolding, not ladders. To uplift the budget and allow the wardens to go for the more expensive quote was ACCEPTED by simple vote. The budget for these further works at Coombe Gardens was agreed at £2500.

The roof at St Mark's vicarage. Quotes to replace the roof are coming in and is estimated at £20,000. This was not budgeted. The property will be rented out on short let during the interregnum between vicars. This would help cover expenses, including getting the property up to standard for rental.

The Rector is exploring possibilities for the housing project and expects the project will solidify after the Head of Finance is appointed.

Galustian Flats: Margaret Swaine who has managed the property, will step down at the end of the year. Her work will fall to the wardens. Jane Austin drew members' attention to the situation involving the lettings agent described in the report.

14. Date of next meeting: 8pm 7th February 2024 at St John's.

The meeting closed with The Grace.

Peter Welsh, Secretary for the meeting, 30th November 2023

<p>Signed:</p> <p>Date: P. Welsh, Secretary for the meeting</p>	<p>Signed</p> <p>Date: Revd A Hodgson, Rector</p>
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