

Parish of West Grinstead

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 23 July 2024, 7.30pm at Hydon, High Street, Partridge Green RH13 8HR

MINUTES

PRESENT

Rev'd. Alison Letschka, Chairman
Rev'd. Caroline Armitage
Mike Phillips, Churchwarden
Neil Jacobsen, Churchwarden
Paul Taylor, Treasurer
Kit White
Olivia Izzard
Karen Adams
Kate Wydra
Jayne Montague-Drake

Alison opened the meeting with a prayer of thanks and for guidance in decisions.

1. APOLOGIES / DECLARATION OF INTEREST

1.1 Apologies: Beryl Payne, Secretary, Dave Ellis, Dave Tidey. It was also noted Pat Kelly and Bill Holt were absent.

1.2 Declaration of Interest: Paul Taylor advised that he had been engaged as Clerk to West Grinstead Parish Council and it was noted that he would not vote or be counted in the quorum on matters related to that organisation

2. MINUTES

2.1 Minutes for the last meeting Sunday 26th May 2024

These were proposed as a correct record by Karen Adams and seconded by Jayne Montague-Drake and approved unanimously.

2.2 Matters arising and action point follow up (not covered elsewhere in this meeting)

The St Michael's defibrillator has been installed outside the Church Room.

3. PCC MATTERS

3.1 Welcome new PCC members, their induction and photos

Alison expressed her thanks to the new Members for being prepared to stand. Photos need to be prepared. CA will run training second half September for new members and those who didn't make it last time.

3.2 Health & Safety Draft Policy

3.2.1 CA confirmed that this had been prepared using some guidance from the Diocese and available material from Ecclesiastical Insurance

3.2.2 It was agreed Neil Jacobsen would take responsibility under the Policy and liaise with Dave Tidey and Kit White with regard to a review of any actions needed on its implementation.

3.2.3 PT raised the question of completion and storage of Risk Assessments. It was noted that whole church risk assessments and the Church Room were priorities and Neil and Kit agreed to take responsibility for completing these.

3.2.4 Adoption of the policy was proposed Kate Wydra, seconded Kit White and approved unanimously

3.2.5 It was agreed the policy would be reviewed every 2 years.

3.3 Future PCC meeting dates

3.3.1 Tuesday 17th September @ St George's 7.30 pm

3.3.2 Tuesday 19th November @ Hydon 7.30 pm

3.3.3 Tuesday 14th January @ Hydon 7.30 pm

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- 3.3.4 Tuesday 11th March @ Hydon 7.30 pm
- 3.3.5 APCM Sunday 18th May @ St George's 12.30 pm

3.4 Conversion of PCC to charitable status

It was recognised that the parish had reached the threshold at which it needed to register as a charity with the Charity Commission. This would not change any obligations or duties, as being an Ecclesiastical Parish the parish is already fully subject to charity law. There would be benefits to having a registered charity number e.g. when applying for grants, gift aid refunds Neil is preparing the appropriate registration papers. All Members will need to sign the Trustee form to submit with the application. Neil will be in touch.

4. FINANCE

4.1 Treasurer's Report and Accounts

- 4.1.1 Thanks were expressed to Mike and Dave for the work done on the handover to Paul. Paul reported that he took over 1st July and was familiarising himself with details, and had identified a few things to check out. Given the recent handover he had not been able to prepare a report for the meeting, but could confirm that there is nothing untoward in the figures. He confirmed he would circulate a report for the current financial year to PCC members after the meeting, once prepared and will be circulated.
- 4.1.2 Work is ongoing to reconcile the 2023 Accounts, following which they will be submitted to the Independent Examiner for approval.

4.2 Treasurer's Induction and Support.

Paul Confirmed he will be attending the Diocesan webinar training for new Treasurers on 14th August.

4.3 Changes to bank account.

- 4.3.1 It was confirmed that we understand the registered office for the Parish 9which will be submitted as part of the Charity Commission application as well, is St George's Parish Church. Paul confirmed the necessary steps had been taken to make him an authorised signatory. He hoped that with this additional information he would be able to be registered to use online banking services. Mike is currently operating the online banking on behalf of the Parish. Alison thanked both Paul and Mike
- 4.3.2 It was noted that Nat West charges are approx. £20 pcm and PT agreed to look in due course at possible alternative cheaper options.

4.4 Architect's invoices for St G toilet extension work.

NJ was aware of this, and it will be funded from the Diocesan money available from the sale of the old St George's Rectory. He will pass the invoice on for payment.

5. MISSION

5.1 Bereavement Group Update:

KW reported that the bereavement group (provisionally called simply the Partridge Green Bereavement Group) is ready to be launched. Members were very supportive and there was a discussion about the venture. The meeting will be a tea-time meeting once a month – timing to be discussed with attendees at a launch meeting in the autumn. KW will liaise with Liz Burtenshaw over booking the Church Room for the initial and future events. We will make the new service known by inviting those we know who have been recently bereaved, advertise it in the West Grinstead newsletter, liaise with other local churches and local funeral directors and advertise in appropriate places such as local doctors surgeries.

5.2 Eco Church

- 5.2.1 Our Grant application on behalf of the Partridge Green Brod group was fully successful. Swift boxes have now been installed on the Church (with appropriate List B approval) and around the village

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- 5.2.2 The grant application for the Pollinator garden was successful, but we are reverting on a couple of stipulations to see if we can get a greater percentage of the work covered (particularly the rock surround)
- 5.2.3 Initial beds of Pollinator Garden have been dug and supplied with plants mainly from the Village Plant Swap – with some from gardens of members of the congregation, and this work will continue over the coming months
- 5.2.4 The hedge whips and trees will be planted in the dormant period in the autumn
- 5.2.5 Next year the plan is to leave a circle unmown as with the churchyard around the beds, with the pathway through and hopefully also a bench by that stage.
- 5.2.6 Eco Church applications are pending awaiting some input from CWs which have been requested. NJ has agreed to review these with Dave Tidey.
- 5.2.7 The fact that the church is actively engaging with the village West Greenstead group is much appreciated.

6. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

6.1 Alison's report:

- 6.1.1 A big thank you to Dave Ellis for having been our Treasurer– formal thanks will be given at St George's next week.
- 6.1.2 Planning of the sabbatical – Caroline and I thought very carefully about this – the pros and cons. We decided to go for it although Caroline had only had barely two years in the parish and doesn't live in the parish. It seems to me that it has worked well and I think this was partly due to the preparation from me but also due to your support of her ministry and your willingness to work together with her over three months. The intention was twofold – for me to be able to take Extended study leave and rest and for Caroline to get a feel for being in charge of a parish which will prepare her for the next stage in her ministry which will begin when she moves on to a new parish in the latter part of 2025.
- 6.1.3 I did study and I did rest and I also visited other churches and came to the conclusion that we are doing well in our Parish in many respects, although of course there are always challenges and new ways to go about doing things. So I have returned in a thankful frame of mind– thank you Caroline and all who took on extra leading, preaching and pastoral work - looking forward to all that we will do together in future.
- 6.1.4 I want to say something briefly about Children's work – Kate has decided to take a break from our monthly Super Sunday at St. Michael's and I will be thanking her more formally next Sunday – but I'm sure you will agree Kate has done well and been very generous with her time and talents, considering all her other responsibilities. I have four or 5 people who will help – which is amazing! - but no-one now to lead any kind of Sunday School so as PCC I invite you to think about whether there is anyone out there who isn't already committed to lots of other aspects of church life. We have done well to build up the children's work after the pandemic, so I don't want to lose too much momentum.
- 6.1.5 I think worship continues to be effective and welcoming and that must always be our main focus – of course we have building and maintenance projects ongoing which is also a good sign that the buildings are used and provide for the whole parish. But worship and prayer and home groups ensure that all those who want to commit to the Christian faith have the support they need. It's the living presence of Christ which enlivens us – and all we do across the whole parish. I'm very fortunate to have so many people taking responsibility here – and I don't take you all for granted! It has been great to come back and find everyone in good heart.

- 6.2 MP added that we had missed Alison, and thanked Caroline for holding the fort. He noted that it was healthy that the congregation had been able to thrive independently during the sabbatical and were able to respond well to Caroline, as a different character.

- 6.3 There was a discussion about Children's work following Alison's comments, and the challenges this represented. It was understood that we operate in a different cultural environment than e.g. 25 years ago. We need to keep thinking about how to address this - and to keep praying and working to support the parents, as we need the parents to come for children to come. It's noted that Messy Church is working well but that is occasional. Alison will be holding a meeting of those interested in children's work during August to consider what we should offer going forward. MP and Rev Alison encouraged PCC members saying we should not be too downhearted and have faith.

7. FABRIC AND PROPERTY

7.1 St George's.

- 7.1.1 The major ceiling project and associated electrical and heating upgrades finally ended on 17th April when Gatwick Park Services Limited made the final tweaks to the heating controller. We should expect to receive an invoice for £1,614.24 (the holdback sum) once we have received the Operation Manual for the system.
- 7.1.2 We have not heard anymore from Woodlands about the disputed bill from them for extra work. Hopefully this has now been written off.
- 7.1.3 The conservation heating seems to be working well although more and different weather conditions are needed before it can be properly assessed. The environmental monitoring continues but will probably end soon.
- 7.1.4 The list of Rectors has now been updated and restored and is now back on the north wall.
- 7.1.5 It was decided at a previous meeting that there was no need to replace the external lead alarm horn on the roof as the main horns were still working. The alarm company have now informed me that there is a register for alarm systems and any shortcomings are noted on the register. DT will get another quote to replace the horn if the committee feel we are now vulnerable in the event of an insurance claim.
- 7.1.6 [PT excused himself from this discussion]
The grass cutting has been a major problem this year. It seems that the PC showed a different area for mowing than the existing when they sent out tender documents for the next two years. This resulted in areas to the south and west of the church not getting cut. It seems that lack of continuity of Councillors and Clerks led to this mistake. DT is still trying to sort out the final details, but believes the contractors are now mowing roughly the same areas as before. It was agreed that we should provide feedback concerning the problems to the Parish Council. DT would be asked to email the clerk.
- 7.1.7 There has been a request to improve the surface in the large car park which gets muddy in wet weather and for most of the winter. Liz R has a quote for shingle using her staff discount of £710 incl. VAT. If we decide to go ahead with this Roy Smith has generously offered to grade the area, make good any potholes with type 1 hard core and spread the shingle which would complete the work although we would need to apply weed killer a week before commencement. I'm confident this would last for many years. It was agreed (NJ proposing and KW seconding) that we should go ahead with the Car Park works. DT / NJ were asked to look at the possibility of including something more stable than simple shingle e.g. some modular underlay. Approved. The PCC authorised the standing committee to approve detailed specification and quotes in due course. FOSGs would be requested to fund the work.
- 7.1.8 Toilet Extension.
- 7.1.8.1 Caroline, Neil and DT attended a Pre-Application meeting at St George's on 27th June with:
- 7.1.8.2 Some members of DAC(including Chair). Archdeacon Angela, Greg Moore and Emma Arbuthnot.
- 7.1.8.3 CBC. Keri Dearmer, Senior Church Buildings Officer.

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- 7.1.8.4 Historic England. Dr Luciana Gallo, Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas, London and South-East Regions Group.
- 7.1.8.5 HDC. Nicola Mason, Conservation Officer +1.
- 7.1.8.6 Architect Jonathan Cerowski
- 7.1.8.7 The concept drawings and SoN were discussed in principle and received general acceptance although Luciana from HE felt that some alternative options should be considered. Neil and DT agreed that we should pay the architect for this extra work so that comments from HE and all the other consultees could be sought as soon as possible.
- 7.1.8.8 Jonathan has now completed these options which have been sent out for comment for all although HE has already indicated they want to discuss other possibilities on these drawings.
- 7.1.9 Electricity at St George's
 - 7.1.9.1 MP advised the PCC that there is a dispute with SSE over excessive bills issued.
 - 7.1.9.2 We received a bill 19th February for £1499.99 which is itself significantly more than expected and the calculations shown on the meter reading page didn't make sense. The meter readings shown were estimated readings
 - 7.1.9.3 DT had queried this on the SSE helpline and sent meter readings on two separate occasions. An in-person reading was also taken by SSE.
 - 7.1.9.4 On 14/5/24 a new invoice was sent for £7260.65. On 29/5/24 SSE tried to take £7260.65 from the church bank account. This was spotted by Mike who cancelled the Direct Debit as there was clearly a mistake which we needed to resolve. DT engaged further with customer services but on 29th May a new invoice was raised for a further £5043.55 making the total £12,304.20.
 - 7.1.9.5 We have raised a formal complaint with SSE. A smartmeter has been installed and the existing meter taken for examination. We are still waiting the hear a full response to the complaint. DT will be asked to follow this up on his return from holiday.
- 7.2 St Michael's**
 - 7.2.1 The new access ramp and associated work is making good progress. MP reported that painting the railings and installing the resin surface are the only items outstanding. Resurfacing of drive will be a separate contractor, and we don't yet have a date for that work.
 - 7.2.2 The church doors are going to be taken off and fully refurbished during early August thanks to FOSM.
 - 7.2.3 The ash tree in the SE corner of the graveyard is suffering from ash dieback and needs to come down. Quotes to remove it are being obtained.
 - 7.2.4 The electrical survey has now been completed and there are some areas of significant concern. Some of these should be addressed soon.
 - 7.2.5 Out of items scheduled for test:
 - 7.2.5.1 22 out of 70 listed were rated potentially dangerous
 - 7.2.5.2 26 out of 70 listed were rated improvement recommended.
 - 7.2.5.3 Overall Assessment: Unsatisfactory.
 - 7.2.6 DT has now spoken to the engineer who has already submitted a quote for the potentially dangerous works: Labour and materials £2905+ vat. This includes removing older breakers safely that have asbestos insulation around the fuse carriers. It was agreed that we should have work done once we have had a chance to get other quotes. DT had advised that he didn't think we are in need of a complete rewire but it would be sensible to get quotes for both urgent work and a rewire as there might be an economy of scale here and avoid duplication of work.
 - 7.2.7 MP advised that a SmartMeter was installed, but it's not working. We are therefore submitting manually. The church has moved supplier to Octopus.

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- 7.2.8 Car Park : PCC Members reported that concerns had been raised by some members of the congregation about use of the car park by local residents. MP explained that so far we have leafleted cars appealing for no parking on a Sunday, but this may have had a perverse effect encouraging parking on other days. Other options were discussed including charging and locking, neither of which would be practical. Concerns were expressed that in any event this type of action could be seen as aggressively territorial. PT asked about charging. There was general agreement that we need to be generous, and not hostile, to neighbours where we can. We are confident we have covered the legal ownership issues in the signage. Alison & Mike will consider any additional or alternative leafleting which might help to improve things without antagonising those that park there.

8. SAFEGUARDING

8.1 Safeguarding Report

- 8.1.1 There were no safeguarding incidents during the last 12 months
- 8.1.2 We adopted a new updated Safeguarding Policy in line with the Diocesan format at the May 2024 PCC meeting.
- 8.1.3 Where other policies are reviewed, we consider them for specific relevance to safeguarding. The Data Protection Policy also adopted at the May meeting is an example, as is the Health & Safety Policy currently under consideration.
- 8.1.4 Risk Assessments have been updated for Children's work
- 8.1.5 DBS Checks have been completed for a number of individuals with roles and responsibilities within the Parish, both new and renewed. We now have a spreadsheet which keeps a record of all these and renewal dates.
- 8.1.6 We have established a Safeguarding area on the Parish Google Drive where all Safeguarding information is stored. This is currently being populated. Access is limited and appropriately controlled.
- 8.1.7 We are working towards compliance with the updated SQP Process required by the Diocese. This will be reported on separately.

8.2 SQP (Simple Quality Protects) Diocesan Safeguarding tool.

Alison reported that the Diocese is being audited by the national independent safeguarding people in 2025. We don't know the detail, but Alison doesn't want to be in a position where the audit could find us non-compliant with SQP. During the sabbatical Caroline and Karen had undertaken significant work to comply, and the only outstanding items are Safeguarding Training and sending out guidance to volunteers on Safer Working Practices. Alison will meet shortly with the CWs and CA to discuss and finalise approach to training to enable us to obtain registration.

9. CORRESPONDENCE (not covered elsewhere)

- 9.1 In 2025 the Diocese will be celebrating 950 years of faith since the establishment on the original mission in Selsey. In relation to this a 'This is our Faith Questionnaire' (online only) has been circulated. It was agreed we would circulate the link on the parish weekly email and invite people to fill it out if they wished

10. CONFIDENTIALITY & PUBLICATION OF MINUTES – OK to publish

11. A.O.B. - None

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17th September @ St George's

Alison closed the meeting at 9.30 pm by inviting members to share the Grace.