

**THE PARISH COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, GREAT BARDFIELD AND
THE ENGLISH MARTYRS THAXTED**

Minutes of the AGM held 23 June 2018 at Great Bardfield

Present:

Fr. Richard (Presiding), Phillip Slater (Chair), Alfred Wheeler (Vice Chair), Robina Debnam, Mary McGee, Fiona Walsh, Damian Walsh, David Jarvis, John Yates, Janet Yates, Kate Fox (Secretary)

1. The Meeting opened with prayers.

2. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Mick Hughes (Treasurer), Phoebe Walsh and Pam Gale.

3. Minutes of prior Meetings:

(i) Minutes of the AGM held 15 June 2017 – These were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting. Proposed Alfred Wheeler; seconded Robina Debnam.

(ii) Minutes of the meeting held 28 April 2018 – Following email correspondence between the Chair, the Secretary and Pam, it had been agreed that the reporting of the item raised by Pam under “Matters of Urgency” at the last meeting was incorrect and ought to be amended so that it said: “Pam noted that she had received feedback from some members of the Thaxted community that they did not necessarily feel welcomed when visiting the church at Great Bardfield. A general suggestion would be to identify visitors to the church and take time to engage with them, particularly on those Sundays when tea & coffee is served after mass”. These were then approved and signed as a true record of the meeting. Proposed Robina Debnam; seconded Damian Walsh.

4. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising that would not otherwise be covered within the Agenda.

5. Election of Officers and Council Members:

Father was pleased to confirm that the Officers were willing to continue in their roles along with the existing Council members.

6. Treasurer’s Report:

The Chairman presented this in Mick’s absence. The overall situation remained good with a surplus of income over expenditure for the year of £14,351.15 and year end funds of £72,773.75. However, the parish recorded a drop in annual income (compared to the prior year) of around £2000. The main increases in parish costs this year were supply priests (£1033) and the cost of plans for the fire escape at Great Bardfield (£2,304). It was noted that we benefited significantly from not paying the full cost of a parish priest and the figures therefore represented an inflated view of our financial position - as a result we needed to continue to be prudent. The Chairman said he was very grateful to Mick who will remain as Treasurer for the coming year.

7. Gift Aid Report:

David gave an overview of the year-end figures. Although these were slightly down on 2016-17, a tax refund of over £8000 was expected. He will make an appeal at both churches in October to encourage any parishioners who have not yet signed up to gift aid.

8. General Data Protection Regulations:

Phillip presented an overview of the current position, referring to the documents already circulated to the members of the Council and noting that we were well on our way to compliance in line with our legal obligations and the expectations of the Diocese. He confirmed that Data Privacy Notices were now displayed at both our churches setting out an overview of the nature of the individual data covered, our obligations and how individual data is handled and treated. In addition:

- Consent Forms: Phillip had prepared consent forms to cover: (i) General Communications, (ii) the Sacraments; and (iii) Housebound and Long Term Illness. These consent forms were to be completed by parishioners as appropriate. Appeals would be made at both churches to that end.
- Data Audit: Phillip had also prepared a form of audit document in relation to church activities. This needed to be reviewed by Council members and completed as necessary (or any queries/clarifications passed to Phillip). Fiona asked if the Children's Liturgy could be added and Phillip will make the necessary amendments.

There was an overall discussion about GDPR and the need to examine: (i) what information was retained about parishioners within the parish; (ii) why it was retained & by whom; and (iii) whether it needed to be retained (& by whom). As part of that discussion, it was confirmed that the parish did not need to appoint a specific Data Protection Officer. Only the Diocese would be considered to be a "data controller" and therefore a Data Protection Officer was only required to be appointed at Diocesan level. Fiona asked about the use of Facebook and WhatsApp as this was more relevant to many younger parishioners; Phillip informed the meeting that use of this means of communication would not necessarily be subject to specific permissions or consents (over and above the implied consent given when individuals accepted an invitation to join a particular Facebook page or WhatsApp Group) but this would need to be kept under review. Robina raised a question for clarification regarding contact details she holds and it was confirmed numbers could not be passed to third parties without permission.

- Website: The Meeting agreed that this needs refreshing and updating but it was not felt necessary to pay for this to be done by an external body/person. Roger said he would look at this. The website would be a useful means of dealing not just with GDPR but all aspects of parish work and communication (e.g. mass times and other key dates should be available via the site). In regard to mass times Robina mentioned the update in the BT – Kate said she would deal with this and Robina would contact the Villager.

There was stress on the importance of cascading information down and Phillip said he planned to talk at mass in each parish, explaining what and why we are doing this and also hoped to write a short summary that could be posted in each church. Fiona would also help the process by attaching consent forms to the e-mails she sends to parents/guardians for Children's Liturgy and Sacramental occasions. Alfred suggested e-mailing consent forms, where possible, would be a way of ensuring maximum coverage as well as making forms available in the churches.

9. Liturgical Items:

National Ecumenical Congress Liverpool 7/8/9 September 2018: Robina reported that the SofG met on the Tuesday prior to the parish AGM but it did not appear they have anything planned for this occasion. She suggested that we could have Holy Hour before the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Friday 7th in Great Bardfield, mass and Holy Hour on Saturday 8th in Thaxted and something else on Sunday 9th in Great Bardfield. The Bishops and Holy Father have been asking about devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and they recommend time is taken to genuflect. Nothing

has come out of the Diocese about the event - it was suggested that Adele Angel (Executive Co-ordinator Evangelisation) might be able to help and Robina agreed to contact her.

Youth: Fiona reported that there were six Confirmations and six First Holy Communions with a joint Service of Reconciliation held earlier in the year.

10. & 11. Ginger Group/Deanery Report:

Damian outlined the current position and explained that the GG had completed their key tasks for the moment in relation to the 'restructuring' phase of Bishop Alan's plan for the Diocese. Comprehensive responses to the Request for Proposals issued by the Diocese in September 2017 and the First Formal Proposal issued by the Diocese at the beginning of Advent 2017 had been submitted on behalf of the parish taking into account the work of the GG and the extensive feedback from parishioners. Bishop Alan has since made a new video for distribution to all parishes providing general feedback and parishes have been invited to discuss that feedback further and respond/raise questions if felt necessary.

In addition, Steve Webb, Director of Development, had prepared a comprehensive letter of feedback for all parishes in the Diocese. It was noted that, for the most part, the content of the letters sent to the parishes was the same and of generic application. In each case, the letters contained one or two paragraphs of specific feedback relevant to the specific parish. The feedback for Great Bardfield and Thaxted was brief but important - recognising the vibrancy of our parish, our significant effort to present constructive ideas, and our work with and leadership among other parishes within the North Essex Deanery.

After a full discussion, it was agreed that until the Diocese re-engaged with the parish further during the latter part of 2018 about its plans for 'restructuring', the efforts of the GG should now turn to the plans and initiatives of the Diocese around 'renewal'. For future meetings of the GG it was agreed that Alfred and Robina would take a co-chair role, establish a parish 'core renewal team' together with certain others and become the representatives of the parish at future SoG meetings.

Damian reminded the Meeting that the Diocese had established a certain protocol regarding the nomination and acceptance of Stewards of the Gospel and we should ensure that protocol is followed. He also spoke about the need for lines of communication between the Diocese, the Stewards of the Gospel, our parish and the members of our GG to be clear and aligned with the expectations of (and information held by) the Diocese. This was duly noted and Phillip took away the task of initial liaison with the Diocese to discuss and take forward the process for nomination of our Stewards in conjunction with Fr Richard.

Alfred and Robina were to reconsider and confirm to Fr Richard after the meeting their willingness to be nominated as Stewards of the Gospel for the parish. Alfred also noted that Linda had attended the last SoG meeting and was keen to continue to attend and play a role. It was felt that we perhaps needed to seek a SoG representative from Thaxted (rather than having 3 from Gt Bardfield), although it was also recognised that no volunteers had yet come forward from Thaxted.

Phillip agreed to seek further guidance from the Diocese as to how many Stewards would be appropriate in order to ensure our overall representation was in line with other parishes etc. and the Meeting agreed to allow until the next Council meeting to see whether any Thaxted representative(s) might be forthcoming.

More immediately in relation to the GG, Robina said that there was still the need to kick-start discussions among the GG and the wider parish about renewal initiatives for our parish. She suggested a meeting for 7 July 2018 and this was agreed.

12. Safeguarding:

It was reported that Linda, Jenny (Balcombe), Fiona, Phoebe, Robina, Damian, Janet and John had all completed their DBS checks whilst Meghan (Butt) and Clementine (Walsh) were in the process. John Yates noted that Eucharist Ministers who make house visits must undertake the necessary checks.

13. Health & Safety:

John said that everything is under control although our H&S check is outstanding. As soon as the fire escape is installed at Great Bardfield this will be undertaken. He mentioned that Our Lady's House smoke detectors should be looked at and brought up to date. He also reminded the Council of the rules about leaving candles burning – although T lights might be OK. Robina asked about insurance in regard to the upcoming Alpha group meetings and it was confirmed this was covered.

14. Buildings:

Fire Escape: Alfred brought everyone up to date in regard to the delayed planning permission, his conversations regarding building regulations and the subsequent delay in BDC granting approval which was delaying the whole process.

Use of Parish Office: Phillip suggested that the former study would be ideal for a parish office - especially in the light of GDPR as we could have a lockable room for files and to locate a laptop connected to the existing (brand new) copier/printer. This was agreed.

15. Chairman's Report:

The report had been circulated prior to the meeting and David wished to record his appreciation for such a detailed and comprehensive report that covered all aspects of the year.

Phillip summarised the report which identified some defining moments. He said dialogue with the diocese is good and this will continue. We valued the work of the Ginger Group which had proved extremely important in responding appropriately to the Diocesan 'restructuring and renewal' programme.

Working with the young of the parish is vital and we are grateful to Fiona for her continued commitment to leading Sunday liturgy for children, catechism for our youth and preparation for Confirmation. Also to Jenny Balcombe for her leadership of the First Holy Communion programme. As a correction to the initial draft report it was noted that there had in fact been four baptisms in the 2017-18 year. The work of our Eucharistic Ministers, at both churches, has been absolutely fantastic and particularly valued during Fr Richard's period of illness.

Highlighting some other key roles and activities he said we were fortunate to have the services of Mick Hughes who continues to act as Treasurer and John Yates who ensures our Health & Safety audit is maintained. He mentioned the Alpha Group and the thriving music aspect of our services.

Volunteering: Phillip said that as with all organisations the role of volunteers is invaluable, whether rotas for coffee mornings, flowers, cleaning, fire warden and so on. There was a special mention for those who helped redecorate the lobby/washroom.

Phillip concluded by saying the heartfelt thanks of the Parish Council on behalf of all members of the parish go to those who have invested time in helping the parish to continue as a vibrant Catholic community.

16. Matters of Urgency:

- (i) Decoration: Robina asked if Brett and Chloe could decorate the lobby. Although the gesture was appreciated John said a programme or plan of the proposed work would need to be assessed to ensure the work was carried out appropriately.
- (ii) Cover Priest Transport: Mary McGee asked for details concerning Father Stewart (one of our proposed cover priests) who needed transport to and from Brentwood. She said she would be happy to liaise with others and organise a transportation rota to and from Great Bardfield. John agreed to take on the same responsibility for transport to and from Thaxted.
- (iii) Voice Amplification at Gt Bardfield: Alfred mentioned the difficulty in hearing the rear speaker when larger congregations required us to open up the double doors. Roger noted that the rear speaker can be turned and should, on those occasions, be turned to face the back of the church. It was agreed that the possibility of a button mic for Fr Richard should be followed up; Alfred had been quoted a price of approximately £150.
- (iv) Books: Robina mentioned the purchase of "Walking with Me" and "Easter to Pentecost" – to be discussed at next meeting.
- (v) GG Working Group: Suggest group to lead evangelisation mission.

17. Dates of Next Meetings:

These would be on 22 September 2017 and 19 January 2018.

18. Closing Prayer:

Father closed the meeting with the Angelus. (Thank you to Robina for the printed prayer cards).

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12 noon.