

The Parish of St. John the Evangelist Newbury

Meeting of the PCC held on Thursday 24th November 2022 beginning at 7.30pm at St John's Church

Present:

The Revd. Gary Collins – Chair

David Oats– Churchwarden

Alison Foulkes – Churchwarden

Kim Slade - Treasurer

Sam Brown – Hon. Secretary

Also in attendance:

Margaret Baker (MB), Jennifer Wright (JW) Andrew Kingston (AK) Stephen Kerry (SK), Andy Grace (AG) Jeremy Wright (JPW) Aeron Slade - part (AS),

1	Opening Prayer & Welcome		
2	Apologies for absence: Jennie Marwick-Evans (JME), Melanie Brown (MAB),		
3	Correspondence No correspondence received		
4	Minutes of the previous meeting The previous PCC meeting held 15 th September 2022 was approved by DO and seconded by AG, unanimous vote from the PCC.		
	Matters Arising from previous minutes No actions to carry over		
6	Safeguarding Update No issues reported, DO asked us to vote on continuation of the Safeguarding Policy for a further 12 months. This was passed unanimously by the PCC.		
7	H&S Update. No issues reported.		
8	Deanery Update Deanery update, SK updated that the Parish Share has been agreed and he is awaiting an update on the Living in Love and Faith Initiative. Revd Gary updated the PCC on the last Synod meeting. A lot of energy over churches offering warm spaces for the cost-of-living crisis, with work being done on co-ordinating different agencies and different opening times. Revd Gary updated the PCC that we should be in good heart. SK will update us on some of the opportunities and growing relationship with Enborne. Revd Gary has asked the PCC to attend an away morning (provisionally 11 th February 2023). Revd Gary thanked the PCC for all their efforts to date.		

9	<p>Vicar's Report</p> <p>Revd Gary updated with words of encouragement for the PCC. He felt that the last couple of months the church has been finding its rhythm again and that the church 'feels good'. Congregation was busy with some new faces each week. He is also aware we have young children coming into church, so we will be looking at a Sunday School one Sunday a month. AK recommended (from experience) to try and make it as fun as possible. SB highlighted that as we start to see younger ones in the congregation, we should tune our language and messaging to reflect the sensitivities of the 'little ones'. Revd Gary is working on formalising the arrangements.</p>
10	<p>Financial Report</p> <p>KS reported that for the current year – YTD to end October we are £13k down (our operating deficit), she predicts that we may claw some of this back (to -£11k for year-end). SB asked whether we have seen a material change in the heating bills, KS replied that the tariff changed in October, so once we get through November (with the cold weather!) we should get a better view then. See Financial Reserves Policy (11)</p>
11	<p>Financial Reserve Policy – discussion</p> <p>Introduction from Kim on the proposed change of approach: Following a meeting of the SFC. KS has been reviewing how much we have in reserves and what is appropriate for us to have in reserves and what we should have available to use to grow the church. She explained the detail of the model, based on the Kath Gibbs legacy with a focus on what we would need to hold in reserve for 'a rainy day'. KS updated the PCC that the Diocese has information and advice on recommended reserves policy which she has incorporated into the model.</p> <p>What the model could look like: The model is based on end of 2021-2022 so will need to be updated, however KS update the PCC that based on the modelling, we could have £200k available to spend if we added up what we need to hold back in reserves £190k v the £400k in the Kath Gibbs legacy, so on that basis, the amount available could be £200k. KS advised the PCC that we need to have a target (say by 2030) of reaching a zero-operating deficit. The challenge for the PCC and church is a creative one; to invest in future projects which will enlarge our presence and service to the community, and hopefully increase support. There are many ways for us to consider what this will mean, (eg, youth worker, cheaper power, more community events, etc). The forecast includes estimate for inflation and dividend incomes.</p> <p>How this may impact the reserves: Potentially we could draw down £25k next year to support reducing the deficit and growing the church. JW asked what would we have left? KS replied that we would still have £150k in the Kath Gibbs legacy which would remain in reserves. JW asked how we are going to balance the deficit and grow the church? KS updated that the PCC could decide on the assumptions which would change the model. As examples KS updated, we could install a new boiler to reduce energy bills or upgrade the organ and have more concerts per year. JPW reflected that the reducing investments need to be modelled, also his view was that we should have a year's reserves in place. AK updated that assumptions around growth needs to be carefully considered. Revd Gary reminded us that the diocese is asking us to review our accounts and reflect on how we could use the gift we have to grow the church. JPW reminded us that there are churches failing and we need to retain reserves. JW suggested we could have a smaller deficit.</p> <p>Opportunities: Revd Gary reminded us we should invest in the future rather than hold back all our funding. JW recommended we look at the boiler, JPW asked how much we would be spending on gas this year, KS suggested £11k this year and probably up to £20k for next year. SK asked whether it would be better to support i-Cap given the costs are likely to rise and KS reminded us of this can be match funded until next Summer. JW updated that the PCC had previously agreed to the i-Cap project on the basis that this did not take funds out of the church legacies. JPW stated he would be unhappy to fund i-CAP from church funds as</p>

	<p>this was specifically agreed previously. AK replied that he would feel happy provided we did not eat into the original funds, as since the decision was made, the investment has grown from £300k to £400k. We could use the growth (ie the £100k).</p> <p>Next steps: Revd Gary asked if KS could carry on working on the model. SB suggested we work on the model to get the assumptions correct first before going ahead with any spend decisions. AK suggested we seek independent financial advice; Philip Reed's name was mentioned. KS will update the model with the latest figures and then agree what we have for 2023. KS asked the PCC for their further thoughts and insights.</p>	
12	<p>Community Activity - Warm Spaces and Cost of Living – Revd Gary updated that we would have a soup lunch every Friday as an addition to the Fair Close timetabled initiatives. This will start 2nd December. A good start as to what we can do, is for us to join in prayers, as we start.</p>	
13	<p>Benefice Expansion update</p> <p>Background Revd Gary updated that we as a PCC needs to vote followed by formal resolutions to the DMPC to indicate (1) their support, of draft Proposals (acceptance of the task force report), or otherwise, AND (2) whether they wish to request a meeting with the DMPC, or not.</p> <p>Latest update SK updated on the process followed thus far. Enborne are appointing a new Treasurer and have formed a new PCC. They have a very active Parish Council and Primary School. The financial DD has been completed and as a reminder we will not be involved in the financial affairs of Enborne. DO updated that the existing parish is happy for Enborne to move across to St Georges and St Johns.</p> <p>Vote Revd Gary asked whether we had any reasons why we would not go ahead. MB pointed out the impact on the clergy workload. JW reminded that St Johns has a big workload and is there not an opportunity for an extra curate for support. Revd Gary updated that there are increasing requirements for churches to be covered by less clergy, we were fortunate when we had Revd Julie with us but that was 'not the norm'. There may be further (unknown at present) changes over the next few years and with Enborne we have control over the process. JPW asked who would be doing the additional services at Enborne and Revd Gary updated that over the last few months services have been covered by St George's. Revd Gary also updated that we have run Forest Church and other events at St Michaels which have been a big success. JPW queried the size of the parish as its listed at only 735. SK updated that the plan is to two services a month support. Revd Gary said they are a neighbouring church asking for our help and believes this is the right thing to do. JPW also asked about the transferring of ownership of the Parsonage House. SK advised he would clarify. JPW expressed concern that he is voting to commit somebody else's time. SK replied that Enborne are not demanding, but simply asking for our support.</p> <p>Result Revd Gary asked the PCC to vote whether to indicate their support for the acceptance of the Task Force Report and its recommendations. DO proposed that we move forward with the Working Groups Recommendations. The PCC voted 11 for the proposal with 1 abstention. The PCC voted on the basis that the name of the Benefice be called, 'Benefice of South Newbury, St George, St John and St Michael and All Angels'.</p>	

14	<p>External lighting the Church at Christmas. Revd Gary updated on the reasons why he is not proposing to light up the external of the church for a 3rd year running. An alternative suggestion is to light up the garden. DO supported, AF suggested another idea was an illuminated cross. Revd Gary asked for our thoughts and ideas. JPW suggested Christmas lights. AS suggested an article on NWN for a single night we would be open for children's families and have a community meal and have hot chocolate and sweets. AS happy to cater for that. AF updated we have the Christmas Tree festival and lots going on, suggested that the chocolate would be fine but food more complicated. Revd Gary asked the PCC and got agreement, to put the lighting of the church on hold this year, but the PCC agreed with Revd Gary to do something more innovative and magical instead.</p>	
15	<p>Progress Update at St. John's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floor repairs on hold, expert has not been able to visit • LED light replacements mainly completed, at present some discussions to try and match the warm colour as the LEDs colour give a very white glare – we don't want the 'Daylight' lamp. • Lady Chapel carpet is on hold • i-Cap funding update, no update • Bike racks, Diocese have agreed, West Berks state we need planning permission as listed building. SK updated that planning permission is going in for 3 hoops for 6 cycles. Revd Gary thanked SK for continuing to own and see this project through. • AG updated we have had a visit from BC Shepherd and Son, the organ specialist. They sent a report which SG went through. There are two phases, £41,600 and £30,200 + VAT. This would future proof the organ, bring it up to date and make the organ sing. AG asked for us to co-opt CS onto the PCC for the duration, this was agreed. AK suggested we may get some match funding. DO reminded that we have used our 'two slots' and one would need to change, or we could wait. SB asked how long the prices are held for, AG will check and report. MB asked if we could break down the phases further, AG updated that the nature of the work is such that two phases are the only practical way forward. Revd Gary thanked AG for the proposals and asked the PCC to review them. 	
16	<p>Living with Love and Faith. The Bishop of Oxford has issued a statement that he is advocating that the Church changes its position to enable CofE clergy to marry people of the same sex. Revd Gary wanted the PCC to be aware that this is the bishop's position, there is no action to be taken at this time, just for the PCC to be aware.</p>	
17	<p>St Johns School – The relationship is going well. There will be a big service coming up which will be a very happy occasion. Revd Gary updated that previously Y1 had been given stones for prayers and the sound of these dropping through the service was lovely.</p>	
18	<p>Any Other Business. There was no AOB</p>	

Closing Benediction, the meeting closed at 21:30

Dates of next meetings:

TBC