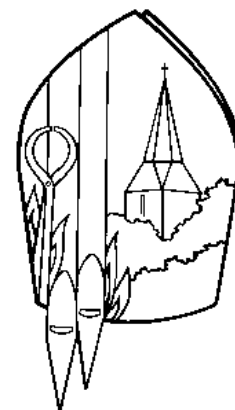


MINUTES OF MEETING OF MAYFIELD & FIVE ASHES PCC
Tuesday, 26 November 2024 at 7:00 pm in London House



Present: Father Michael Asquith Chairman
 Robin Holliday Hon Treasurer
 Stephen Blurton Church Warden
 Emma Ryder Richardson
 Karen Dines
 Karen Mack
 Kate Sanday
 Lindy James
 Phyllida de Salis
 Rachel Robinson
 Roger Salwey
 Tim Reid

Father Michael welcomed all PCC members and began the meeting with a prayer.

1. Apologies for absence:

Deacon DI Blackden
Carl Walters Church Warden
David Whittall
Guy Mantoura
Sue Smith

2. Finance Report

a. Current situation

Delivered by RH – Papers Attached in **Appendix 1**.

Year to date we are tracking a £21,000 shortfall of income compared to expenditure. We have the Christmas Fair and Christmas collection of revenue which we need to work on to maximise.

Nothing additional to report on the restricted funds.

Regular giving is running at 4% lower than 2023. This is after inflation increases on over half of our regular donors. The fall reflects people leaving the scheme following relocations and death. We will need to revert to the congregation with a new fund-raising initiative in the New Year.

b. Pensions

We are now fully compliant with all pension's legislation. Both our Director of Music and Parish Administrator are members of the scheme.

c. Investment Committee proposals

Investment changes detailed in the papers (**Appendix 2**) are self-explanatory.

RH sought PCC approval which was proposed by ERR and seconded by TR.

Approved unanimously by PCC.

d. Parish Share 2025

RH ran through changes made by the Diocese which include Parishes not being credited for vacancies or revenue received from special services such as weddings and funerals. We are asked to make a Parish Pledge in January.

Mayfield has always worked to pay its way as we do not want to be looked at critically if Parish Mergers are considered.

RH has sought clarification on the figures prepared by the Diocese.

For 2025 we are looking at an increase from £73,000 to £81,000 (+11%).

TR – believed we should pay, but had concerns about the financial acumen of the Diocesan Finance Team. Concerned they are not working based on total return accounting and securing the best yield possible from the asset portfolio they manage. He suggested we should write asking why they are only able to secure a 1.6% return on investment when 4% should be seen as the norm. The letter should challenge the prevailing thought and assets should be managed more productively.

RH discerned that there was more disquiet from the other Parishes than in previous years and KM said there have been central savings with a view to keeping costs down.

RH said the Diocesan Committee were prepared to answer questions at a recent Deanery meeting which was an improvement on 2023 when they did appear to be unsympathetic with issues at Parish level. He suggested we offer a 3.5% inflationary increase on the 2023 contribution.

MA commented this year the proportion of Parochial Fees going towards Clergy Stipends. He quoted that for a recent “Crematorium Only” funeral he took earned the Diocese £230 but nothing for the Parish, having lost three hours of his time. He asked that we write seeking confirmation as to the points we raised following the Deanery meeting.

RH suggested we should defer a decision until the January PCC meeting.

3. Mission through Music – An Update

MA referred to the discussion at the September meeting about leveraging our strong musical traditions to encourage people to attend Church at St Dunstan’s. Following the Nicolson Trust application to secure funding for the Mission Through Music project approved at the September PCC Meeting, he has been informed that due to the dispute with the Hadlow Down and Buxted Parishes over the distribution of funds from the Trust, there has been an embargo on giving and has been reviewed by Diocesan Secretary.

As a result, it has been determined the Trust is well managed, but he advised it is not set up for Mission or Outreach and funds cannot be used for the benefit of those who have not been Baptised into the Church of England. Funds can only be used for CofE purposes.

A solution is to amend the rules of the Trust to make them wider ranging which could include our request for a grant to support Mission Through Music in Mayfield. As the change may take some time to implement, we are currently unable to apply for funding to support this project until the rules have been ratified.

We therefore have two options open to us:

- a. Cancel the project, or
- b. Fund from the PCC by drawing on our capital.

MA advised that Lucy Piercy has now secured links at Mayfield and Five Ashes C of E Primary Schools in addition to Burwash and Etchingham and is keen to get the project going.

RH commented that we should be ensuring that the project can continue, should Lucy leave St. Dunstan's and he also had concerns that Nicolson Trustees may not support the request if we have been funding from our own resources.

PdS – felt we should back the proposal as this is linked to our future.

KD – Could we start this slowly to ensure the momentum and goodwill is not lost (focusing on our own Church schools).

RS commented that if Lucy left the project would continue as it would remain part of the job description for future applicants.

RH felt we should consider seeking specific funding from the Parish when a further request for increased financial support is made in Spring 2025. People may well be very interested in supporting a specific project. MA asked if the PCC is prepared to fund the project for three years.

MA said he would like to start the project in January, but a Business Plan should be put forward for PCC to review and approve at its January meeting. He also felt we should go to the congregation and Music in Mayfield to ask for financial support. MA cautioned we will need to be very clear about how the schools can support the project.

RR asked if this was a Diocesan initiative as her sister-in-Law in Burnley is employed directly by the Diocese of Blackburn to go into schools. It is not

ERR suggested that a sub-group or PCC member should be set up to support Lucy as needed. RS agreed that this should be considered.

MA said he would like approval to go to a maximum of £10,000 pa based on supporting the two schools within our Parish only for the time being. The project will be scaled to fit hours worked as there will be an element of seasonality.

RH – commented that payment should include Pension and NI.

The motion was put to a vote of the PCC and approved unanimously subject to a Business Plan for the January meeting to review.

4. PCC Vacancies now and in 2025

MA advised RH will resign as Treasurer in April 2025 at the APCM and thanked him for his hard work over many years.

Current vacancies include:

- a. Safeguarding Officer (does not have to be on the PCC or a member of the Congregation) – Required immediately.
- b. Treasurer – from April 2025
- c. PCC Secretary (does not have to be on the PCC or a member of the Congregation) – Required immediately
- d. Possibly a Church Warden – from April 2025

SB indicated he would be prepared to become Treasurer but would need to relinquish his Church Warden position due to the time commitment.

All PCC members were asked to reflect on these issues.

5. Fees for 2025 and Beyond – Appendix 3

A proposal shared with the meeting for fees in connection with weddings and funerals in 2025.

MA advised whilst the Legal Fees cannot be changed we have discretion over bells, choir and vergers.

MA advised the Standing Committee would like to increase the fees over which we have discretion by 5% to the nearest £1.

RH drew the PCC's attention to increased employment costs such NI. As a result it was agreed to increase the organist fee to £165, but pay £160.

The fee amendments were approved unanimously.

6. Health and Safety

ERR reported:

All risk assessment forms have now been received, and the Parish Administrator has them all on file and electronically. She will meet with the Parish Administrator and Carl Walters to assess where we are and fine tune anything that needs further attention.

As the policy was signed off by the PCC in March 2024, she will bring it up for review at the March 2025 review. At this time there will be an additional area of responsibility to be added that was omitted in the original. At this time she will contact all those responsible for writing their individual risk assessments, asking them to review them for the coming year.

The Parish Administrator holds all the paperwork required for making the regular checks required throughout the church building and St. Dunstan's.

RH – Reminded the PCC the Church Risk Assessment needs to be updated as it was last done in 2018. **SB to progress with Carl Walters.**

MA asked it to be recorded that ERR has done a wonderful job in updating our records and processes to the point where they need to be.

7. Safeguarding

The lack of a Safeguarding Officer was discussed as GM has had to resign due to increased work commitments.

KD felt that it is important that the replacement should be a PCC member familiar with St. Dunstan's and all who attend regularly.

RH & KM suggested a choir member who already looks after Junior Members might be a good fit but MA felt that they would be too involved with one particular group.

RS asked if there is a Job Description for the post and KD undertook to circulate it, reminding the meeting that the appointee must be trained to a certain level (**Appendix 4**). RS said he would consider the subject to being able to review the job description.

KD asked if GM has officially resigned with the Diocese, but MA was not sure. He emphasised the importance of making a new appointment as soon as possible and would check the current position with GM on DBS and training for all appropriate roles.

8. The Churchyard

a. Progress re the Nuns' Burial Area

MA reported slow progress. The new land will be gifted to the Diocesan Board for Finance to be held to the order of the Parish of Mayfield. The legal work is being progressed, but we have no update. The Nuns' Order also want to be kept informed of progress.

Jeff Mitchell estimates it will cost an additional £1,000 per year to maintain the extra space. Given that the £20,000 endowment should yield 5%, the extra cost should be covered.

b. Jeff Mitchel's contract fee for 2025

RH advised that Jeff has asked for an increase in his fees from £9,600 to £14,000 as he will be working extra hours due to the resignation of his assistant. The depreciation cost of his equipment also needs to be covered. His commitment to looking after the Churchyard remains but he is reducing his working hours with a view to retirement.

RH commented that there has been no significant increase to Jeff's fees for some time and agreeing to this rise would certainly secure his goodwill. TR commented that it would be hard to find a replacement who was as committed.

RH felt a middle way might be to negotiate a fee of around £12,000 which he believes will secure Jeff's goodwill.

RH committed to continue negotiations with Mike Hand Bowman.

9. Fabric

Current Property Projects

Aynscombe Memorial Restoration

Funding is secured from the Friends of St Dunstan's and TR is providing support to secure a Faculty.

Additional Handrail

The budget of £1624 + VAT was previously approved by the PCC and TR is also providing support to secure this Faculty.

Glass Doors

SB advised that the PCC needs to decide if it wants the Fabric Committee to continue with this project. If so, does it want the doors to be installed within the porch or outside the doors currently in place.

ERR commented that she had seen several churches that had made this alteration successfully and it would be helpful to see how others had solved this installation.

MA advised he is in two minds. He preferred glass doors on the exterior of the Church Porch but understands that there are planning considerations with this solution. He is also concerned about the cost and that we should be appealing to the congregation and the community.

TR described the project as an expensive luxury and RH questioned whether it was likely to increase our attendance numbers.

RR – Felt that the proposed Mission through Music project is more important.

LJ – Advised the doors would improve our Eco Credentials by retaining more heat.

KD – Felt it would be good to invest in the future of our building. She would like to see the project progress if it gives us an open and welcoming aspect.

ERR – not against the idea, but should we be doing it this year given the fall in our income and the committed expenditure increases we have approved this evening.

RH concerned timing does not feel right at this moment given all the other demands on our budget and the meeting was reminded of the upcoming Quinquennial inspection.

The PCC agreed to review the matter in twelve months' time.

External repairs to the Glubb Window Area

SB reported our builders, Parkers are prepared to undertake repairs in line with his 2024 estimate. The Friends of St Dunstan's have previously indicated that they are prepared to support this work.

ERR would check the cupboards that are most affected by water incursion as the dampness is very bad.

Broken Stained Glass Window in North Aisle

SB reported this is now repaired and RH has an estimate of £1,200 for which an insurance claim will be raised but there is an excess of £1,000.00.

The Organ – Please see attached report from Chris Harris – Appendix 5

RS commented that the organ was installed 30 years ago and is due a major clean that would take three weeks. There is also a secondary issue of dampness, but the work is essential to ensure the long life of the instrument

RH asked for a report to advise timing and likely cost, and the PCC supported this. The St. Dunstan's organ is highly regarded in the region, and it is an important asset for its musical involvement both locally and to a wider audience.

10. 2025 - The Diocesan Year of Faith

MA introduced the Diocesan Year of faith celebrating the anniversary of the Nicene Creed. A Rotherfield Deanery service will take place at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 21 January 2024 at St Mary's, Hartfield celebrating the History and Christian Faith of our Diocese led by Bishops Will and Martin.

The Deanery Churches having been asked to contribute, MA would like to celebrate what has been achieved at St Dunstan's over the last three to four years as we work to enhance its role in the community through our work with its many organisations such as Mayfacs, the schools, and Mayfield Festival.

11. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th September 2024

Approved.

12. Matters arising – none

13. Dates of next Meetings

January, 28th , 2025, March 25th 2025

APCM 6th April

14. Any Other Business (Please inform Fr Michael by 10am on Sunday 24th November)

No other business notified.

15. Closing prayer

After a moment of quiet, FM closed the Meeting with the words of The Grace.

16. Date of Next Meeting:

Tuesday, 28 January 2025 at 6.30 pm for 7.00pm in London House.

Coffee / Tea: Stephen Blurton

Signed as an accurate record by:

Name:

Date: