



Minutes of PCC Meeting
Tuesday 7th December 2021 at 18:30
In COGS and on Zoom

Present: Howard Wright, David Duffin, Andrew Walters, David Craigen (z), Vicky Efstathiou (z), Pip Hughes, Timothy James, Pam Maloney, Bob Meekums (z), Abi Mezzullo (z), Mike Saltmarsh (z), Colin Harbidge (guest), Jane Hughes (guest), Lorna Littlewood (guest), Chris McGrath (minutes secretary).

1. Welcome and Apologies

Action

Howard welcomed members and guests to the final meeting of 2021. A particular welcome to Colin Harbidge, here to clarify queries about the Common Mission Fund (CMF)

Chris McGrath had agreed to attend to take minutes.

Apologies were received from Janet Foster, Rich Gillard, Howard Short, Jill and David Williams.

2. Worship & Prayer

Howard read from Psalm 33:12 onwards and reminded us that we should be people of appropriate fear – fear in the Lord. We are at risk of fear/anxiety over financial situation. He pointed out that before the letter was sent to the congregation informing them of the £14k shortfall, that one individual donated that exact amount – half now and half in January. We must acknowledge that God has responded, and we need to step out in faith.

We joined in sung worship – ‘O lord my God’

3. Declarations of (financial) Interest

None.

4. Common Mission Fund – Colin Harbidge

Colin gave a brief historical overview of the present situation in the Winchester Diocese (Appendix 1) and then invited questions from PCC (Appendix 2).

5. PCC – 10th November 2020

- a. Approval of Minutes – approved, to be signed off at the next meeting.
- b. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting:
 - i. Publication of Minutes. Standing Team have reviewed minutes January – October 2021 and redacted sensitive information. They are ready to be published on the website.

6. Pastoral reorganisation

David D reported on a meeting called by Archdeacon Richard Brand to raise issues regarding the parish merger between St Andrews Medstead and COGS. Present on Zoom were David Duffin, David Williams, Debbie Barns (Medstead warden), Archdeacon Richard, Brian Pritchard (Area Dean) and Lucy Howlett (Diocesan Pastoral Planning Administrator).

The meeting was called to check all had been properly explored and raised before moving to next stage. But everything had been discussed at Bishops meeting in March. However, we have already submitted comments and concerns. Debbie is particularly concerned about financial situation.

Richard was asked what help is available, - archdeacon mentioned contact with others, particularly Alton Parish of the Resurrection (POTR) who have been through such a merger before.

There will be a meeting on 16th Dec of the dMAP committee planning meeting, to start formal process as previously explained.

Discussion about when we discuss finer details regarding PCCs etc? Reluctance to make decision without more information. No point in looking at finances or constitution of PCCs until the merger is definitely going to happen.

The plan is that two parishes become one. The only alternative would be to have two parishes within one benefice. In the short term this looks easier. In the long term it complicates decisions. It would also mean that Howard would need to divide his time to run two parishes, which would mean he could give neither the supervision they would want. Hence the alternative is considered undesirable.

COGS and St Andrews must decide the next step. There is nothing the diocese can decide for us, but not a lot of guidance they can give either. As issues are being faced in twenty-two areas advice could be shared/pooled, e.g., over Charity Commission regulation changes, etc.

If either party objects, there need to be sound reasons, not just 'I don't want it'.

Medstead, as the smaller parish, feels understandably vulnerable, having serious concerns particularly over finance.

Clearly, once formal proposals are on the table, objections will come into the open.

7. Finance.

a. Report from Finance Team (doc: *Fund Raising Projects - Meeting Nov 2021.docx*)

The report was described as the Team's initial suggestions. They will be meeting in early 2022 to discuss the ideas further and who takes responsibility for particular ideas.

b. Agreeing Budget for 2022 (doc: *Draft 2021 budget for PCC 07-12-2021.pdf*)

David Craigen advised that the document is still a forecast as full figures for 2021 are not yet available. He then took PCC through the document. One-off gifts had come in as a result of Howard's parish letter. Seven families had reviewed their giving; two had to decrease, five were able to increase. Overall, there was little change.

A member inquired about £7k 'other costs of Children's/Family work'. In general, these were expenses relating to hospitality/materials/toddlers' group/bumps and babes/preschool resources/mileage, books, youth weekends, etc. It was recognised that it would not be a good use of time for staff to create a detailed breakdown, while acknowledging that PCC have a responsibility to see money being spent appropriately.

There was some discussion regarding whether we should be making savings or continue to step out in faith and rely on God's provision, despite the continued downward trajectory.

David C proposed that we use the current budget figures to measure our performance in 2022. Howard seconded. The proposal was **carried with one** objection and **one** abstention.

Howard proposed a vote of thanks to David Craigen for his management of finances.

8. Other Diocesan Matters

a. Diocesan Carbon Zero strategy, feedback

Item deferred to next meeting

b. Protect Duty

No further discussion required

9. Teams

- a. Personnel:
One person has been approached; we await a reply **HW**
- b. Building. Nothing to report.
- c. Ministry Leaders. Nothing to report.
- d. Mission Team.
A paper is to follow. It is suggested at this stage that we continue to support six of the original twelve 'Missions of the Month' by prayer and maybe fundraising. **Mission Team**

10. Safeguarding

Paul Dorey, Safeguarding Officer, requests that copies of the Safeguarding Training certificates that PCC members obtain should be emailed to him for the record. **PCC**

11. Health and Safety.

The November 2021 Report (doc: 21.11.04 H&S Report.docx) was received and noted.

12. Any Other Business. None.

13. Date of next meeting:

11th January 2022 @ 7.30pm

As the only special agenda items are End of Year figures and Carbon Zero Strategy, the date may be moved on a couple of weeks

(Note added 01/01/22: next meeting moved on to 25th January 2022.)

Howard concluded the meeting with prayer.

A brief historical overview of the present situation in the Winchester Diocese

Colin Harbidge

Last 2+ years have been complicated by several factors.

The Diocesan Budget of about £12/13 million breaks into 3 areas:

1. Mission development, 79% – cost of local clergy, stipend/pension/national insurance, buildings and ministry.
2. Mission support, 15% - central support – finance team, diocesan posts, legal requirements.
3. National churches mission 6% (has reduced recently) – this covers training so benefitting local churches too.

Income through the Common Mission Fund (CMF) – at 80% from parishes it is similar to 79% at (1) above.

Although Winchester is one of the oldest dioceses in the UK, it doesn't have much historical income. This is not a recent phenomenon; it goes back to the Civil War! We can compare Winchester to Oxford which has £34M pa. historical income compared to our £200k. Therefore, the Winchester Diocese is wholly reliant on parish donations. There is no slack when things go awry, and CMF is vital. Colin thanked COGS for stepping up and making our contribution.

More recently (mid 2019) synod approved a 3-year challenging vision. By end of year that shortfall was massive.

Early 2020 savings were proposed, aiming to avoid £8/900k shortfall. The March 2020 lockdown made things worse as churches reported a huge fall in income through cancelled hall rentals/fundraising, and there is no end in sight. There was uncertainty around who would return afterwards? Some people would get used to doing other things on Sunday. There has been plenty of great effort online, but overall, there has been a 20% impact on attendance across the country. We still hope it may improve but it remains worrying.

2020 budget was immediately reviewed, and an emergency budget established for 2021. All saving is difficult and painful. Staff and curates have been furloughed, vacancies frozen, and all property improvements stopped (except emergencies). Parishes were great; many used their reserves and we survived 2020.

2021 has been worse as reserves can only be spent once. The taskforce made £1.5/2M savings. Posts were closed and twenty-two staff positions were cut, causing pain and challenges in many parishes. However, there was no alternative. Cuts will have serious impact on spreading gospel/mission, so we must hope these will be temporary.

There is huge pressure on stipendiary clergy. There are many vacancies and we currently have less than 100 stipendiary staff.

The 2021 Budget was reduced from £10M to £9.3M so all parishes have been asked for less, but next year the budget will increase to £9.6M as our intention is to step out in faith. We are all being asked for 7% increase during this time of unprecedented financial crisis.

A Panel looks at requests for reduction of contribution and has refused COGS request of £6,000 reduction as we still have reserves while some parishes are in the red. However, contribution to CMF is a gift so we can refuse to give full amount

Looking at diocese situation in three different areas:

1. Financial stability of parishes is worse than it has ever been
2. Quality of teaching/discipleship is very good
3. Level of trust in the diocese is as low as ever with some parishes who are losing vicars are refusing to give to CMF, seemingly to 'punish' the bishops. However, in reality it's the other parishes that lose out, not the bishops.

PCC's Questions to Colin Harbidge

- *If we abolish the Diocese tomorrow, how many parishes could not survive?*
Half would close.
The average total cost of providing a parish with a vicar is about £70k, though the incumbent receives only a fraction of that figure. Winchester is the 6th most affluent diocese yet has some of the poorest parishes. While the PCC members of some northern parishes are very wealthy, in some southern parishes the vicar is the highest earner on PCC. Even dismissing every diocesan employee would not meet the £2M shortfall.
- *Do we need 42 diocese? Are there radical proposals being considered?*
10 years ago 3 dioceses in Leeds merged and it was a terrible disaster, costs went up, but lessons have been learned. It is an option, but currently we have no authority to do that. We share resources with neighbouring dioceses - some finance/education/legal/safeguarding/HR areas are merged as specialists are needed so sharing is cost effective
- *Please can you give us a breakdown of how it costs £10M to employ 100 priests?*
117 posts, 35 curates,
15 houses for duty posts plus costs – stipend, pension, NI,
2 people legally required for the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC),
4 ex-police officers in safeguarding
- *We look ahead and plan the good stewardship of this parish's resources including setting a reserves policy, but we are now expected to erode our reserves to sustain the diocese.*
We have had requests from parishes across the diocese for £300k reduction, and we do understand the problem. If you can't pay the full amount so be it. Our problems are your problems and vice versa, so if you don't pay the £6k you won't get a rude letter from us!
- *Our budget doesn't breach our reserves policy only because we have made a decision to remove tithing. Where parishes merge, they end up with one vicar but 2 lots of CMF. Is that just?*
Parishes are asked to give according to what they can give not what they can get back. This is counter-cultural but is the policy that the parishes representatives on diocesan synod have decided to follow. We acknowledge that the CMF model may not be the best model in the future
- *We don't know what the situation will be in future. If things don't get better all parishes could end up with no reserves. What will happen then?*
We are looking at diversifying. Previously, whenever we merged parishes, we kept redundant vicarages. Bishops Council agreed 41 properties to go in next few years, raising £20/25M which when invested could bring in £500k pa.
We must look at longer term strategy as even pre-covid costs were going up and the number of parishioners was going down.
The diocese must look at promoting growth. Various projects have been very successful in Southampton/Bournemouth/Andover.
Simply cutting clergy posts doesn't help speed growth.
- *What can be done where clergy do not perform satisfactorily?*
That is always very difficult. Disciplinary processes are costly and time consuming.
What does capability look like?
How do you challenge what they say God is telling them to do?
- *Can a diocese borrow money?*
Yes – we need to look at possibilities. But ecclesiastical law complicates such an option.
- *When creating new churches - what works? Can we share advice? Is there a formula?*
HTB has a formula for church planting.
But secondary planting is less clear. How can Church Plant A plant Church B? It's an art not science but definitely relies on 20/30 strong disciples to go with a vicar.