



St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Parochial Church Council - 17 May 2023

Present:

Andrew Beech	(Chair)
Keith Hilton-Turvey	(Rector)
Tony Hodder	(Associate Priest and CEO, LEAF)
David Houghton	(Churchwarden)
Cath Beech	(Churchwarden)
Stephen Cheetham	
Maria Dineen	
Benjamin Hilton-Turvey	
William Hopkinson	
Anne Scull	
Peter Scull	
James Smith	

Observer: Sue Simpson

Apologies: Sue Cooper, Christabel Panter, Peter Veasey, Will Wake

1117. Andrew Beech was unanimously elected chair of the meeting. It was agreed that Sue Simpson, who is to join the PCC in July, could attend as an observer.

1118. Keith Hilton-Turvey opened with Psalm 15 and prayer. He welcomed the new PCC.

Minutes of meetings held on 15 March and 13 April

1119. These were agreed unanimously.

Minutes of Standing Committee meeting held on 1 May

1120. These were noted. Maria Dineen pointed out that the church has a Facebook page and wondered why it wasn't posted/linked to *Voice of Ledbury*. Whilst this would require the church to sign up to *Voice of Ledbury*, which has been known to be controversial on occasions, it would give the church's news much greater reach within the town. Keith Hilton-Turvey intimated he was willing to trial it if the PCC were agreeable. The proposal was adopted with nine votes in support and three abstentions.

1121. William Hopkinson highlighted that the new Communications Group that was being activated might have different ideas. The general view was if that group wanted to reverse the decision or had a different approach it could propose change to the PCC.

Safeguarding

1122. Following advice from Annie Lindon, it was noted that:

- Members of PCC do not require DBS checks unless otherwise working with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Members of the Pastoral Support team undertaking home visits require enhanced DBS.

1123. It was suggested that the membership of the home visit team should consist of Val Houghton, Sue Cooper, Richard Nightingale, Christabel Panter, Sue Simpson and June Smith. This was agreed with ten votes in favour and two abstentions.

1124. David Houghton expressed great irritation that the pastoral care coordinator had not been involved in the selection of the home visiting team. This he felt undermined the principle of teamwork. Although the issue was predominantly a safeguarding one in terms of vulnerable adults, there was broad agreement that effective team working was required across the various groups, with individuals taking lead responsibility for specific elements of church business, and this is an example of this. James Smith also expressed concern that June Smith may not have been aware that her name was on the 'pastoral care home visit' list.

1125. Tony Hodder pointed out that all but one of the identified individuals was female. It would be prudent to add more men to the list, given that an individual might find themselves offering pastoral care in a private home on a one-to-one basis. It was suggested that the church should have a lone worker protocol and/or all pastoral care visits should take place in pairs.

Action: Val Houghton

Vision and church awayday

1126. Cath Beech reported that 42 people had responded to the survey, which was a good response. However the impression of the church given in the responses was not a positive one. As a healthy church we were not performing well, with an average score of only 2-3 (out of 5). Lots of qualitative comments remain to be grouped and themed. The churchwardens aim to achieve some positive suggestions for the PCC and the congregation to focus on and explore at the forthcoming church awayday.

Action: Cath Beech/David Houghton

1127. David Houghton reported that he had looked at PCC training in the form of a course entitled *PCC Tonight*. He felt that training was essential, and would investigate the course further. The PCC agreed (unanimously) in principle to undergo this training.

Action: David Houghton

Reviews

1128. Keith Hilton-Turvey reported that he has visited John Masefield School and met both the Head Teacher and the head of music. Both appear more willing to engage than hitherto and may wish to use the church for their rehearsals. There is a young student who

wishes to learn to play the organ, who is interested in practicing on the church organ. Keith reported she has been encouraged to contact Kate Cheetham.

1129. John Masefield School will be offering GSE RE from September 2023. The head of RE is meeting Keith. Whilst she is primarily interested in eastern spirituality, the RE course is about all religions, faiths, and philosophies.

Action: *Keith Hilton-Turvey*

1130. It was reported that the Christian Union at the school is up and running. There are 10 young people facilitated by David Taylor-Black, leader of the Kiln Church in Ledbury. The CU meets fortnightly.

Communications Group membership

1131. PCC had voted to have establish a permanent communications group, to which members need to be appointed. Sue Cooper and Will Wake had previously volunteered to join this group, and Keith Hilton-Turvey and Stephen volunteered at the meeting. Stephen agreed to contact Mary Anne Keyes and Christine Walters to see whether they would be willing to join. The purpose of the group is as previously agreed. Subject to the agreement of Mary Anne Keyes and Christine Walters the membership was agreed with ten votes in favour and two abstentions.

Action: *Stephen Cheetham*

Website

1132. Stephen Cheetham reported that the new website (www.stmichaelsledbury.org) is up and running and he sought comments. Once the remaining streaming issues are dealt with the old website can be switched off. The problem is that migrating the phone line to an online system has severed the broadband connection. The new broadband connection was to go live on 18 May.

1133. Stephen also reported that three church email addresses have been established for the rector, churchwardens and treasurer. It was suggested that Mary Anne Keyes should also have a dedicated email for her church activities. Maria Dineen was to approach her about this.

Action: *Maria Dineen*

Resource Centre

1134. Christine Walters is leading on organising training for selected people so that IKnowChurch is optimised for the benefit of the church. One issue is targeted email groups for communications. She was thanked for all her hard work on this and introducing IKnowChurch to the church.

St Katherine's

1135. Tony Hodder presented the paper/proposal at Annex A, and Cath Beech those at Annexes B and C. Tony made it clear that unless LEAF achieves tenancy of St Katherine's there will be no injection of funds from Talk Community; LEAF as a co-tenant or sub-tenant would not attract the necessary grant aid. LEAF is in a position to make an expression of

interest for the forthcoming Government grants to create community hubs, and are in discussion with Ledbury Foodbank to ensure that the two applications from Ledbury complement each other. Talk Community will provide legal assistance to LEAF with regard to their application.

1136. Keith Hilton-Turvey and David Houghton declared an interest as they are both existing lessees of the hall, members of the PCC and trustees of LEAF.

1137. Concern was expressed that, were LEAF to take on the lease of St Katherine's, the church would be giving up control of its church hall. It was stressed that, at this stage, all the PCC was being asked to do was to agree that discussions with the Dean and Chapter could commence and that measures to protect the church's interests would need to be agreed as part of that. The PCC would be kept up to date, and consulted about any outcome. Accordingly, in the discussions, it was agreed that the PCC would be represented by Stephen Cheetham¹ and James Smith. The rector and churchwardens would be represented to protect their interests as existing lessees, and LEAF would represent themselves.

1138. The proposal at paragraph A.9 was put to the vote and agreed with eight votes in favour and four abstentions.

Action: *Tony Hodder*

Finance

1139. Stephen Cheetham was confident that there will not be a deficit this year if the church is careful about expenditure. Parish Share could be maintained at its existing level. The investment strategy is under consideration. Stephen will explore the Energy Discounts Scheme as the church may be eligible for a higher rate of discount as a member of the Association of Major Churches. William Hopkinson noted that the church needs to think strategically about how it could increase its revenue to more sustainable levels. It should not expect to maintain a reduced rate of Parish Share for long, as the diocese is currently funding expenditure on the parish.

Action: *Stephen Cheetham*

1140. Stephen pointed out that, if we want to improve audio in the church, the money will need to be raised specially, as there are no church funds available. Stephen was thanked for his efforts on the church's behalf.

Chorister bursaries

1141. The proposal at Annex D was agreed with twelve votes in favour and one abstention.

Action: *Stephen and Kate Cheetham*

Fabric

¹ Subsequently replaced by Sue Simpson.

1142. David Houghton reported that the roof valley repairs are out to tender. It is hoped to get the work done this summer. Other items:

- Upper Room refurbishment: an interim step of using the space for storage is planned, ahead of full refurbishment which will be a major expense;
- Pew Rearrangement: Andrew Beech is setting up a meeting of the Fabric Sub-Committee and interested parties to understand the issues relating to concert/performance space and draft a proposal. This and the related faculty will need to be very well argued since the Victorian Society usually oppose any such rearrangement of Victorian furniture;

Action: Andrew Beech

- Trinity Altar: Now stored in the Chapter House, this is not needed in the church and the PCC is looking to find a good alternative home for it. Jenny Harrison is looking into its origins to enable a faculty to be applied for. Failing that, we will need to talk to the Diocese re. disposal;
- Funerary Monuments: Restoration work to the Lucy Monument was proposed at a cost of £2,698. Full renovation of the Skinner Monument having proved prohibitively expensive, a small repair is planned at a maximum cost of £1,500. These were proposed by Andrew Beech, seconded by Keith Hilton-Turvey and agreed unanimously;

Action: Andrew Beech

- Sound Review: Keith Hilton-Turvey is progressing quotations from differing suppliers: an update is planned for the next meeting.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Moveable Objects

1143. David Houghton has completed an inventory of church silver and is investigating which of these may be stored securely at the Cathedral.

Action: David Houghton

1144. Floor coverings: A breathable solution is sought for the floor covering in the Chapter House: the existing floor covering was unsatisfactory as it had become damp and has now been removed. The underlying stone floor is in poor condition and is sufficiently uneven in parts as to represent a trip hazard. It is proposed to consult the DAC as to what may be available to provide some measure of levelling out, plus acoustic deadening but without causing damp. The existing carpet in the children's corner is felt to be satisfactory and will remain in place.

Action: Cath Beech

Action points from previous meetings:

1145. The provision of non-alcoholic wine as an alternative at Communion had been actioned. Keith Hilton-Turvey will purchase suitable wine.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Other Business

1146. Anne Scull, seconded by Stephen Cheetham, proposed that, as in 2022, Max's Fish Van be granted permission to use the churchyard on 2 October as the normal pitch will be occupied by a fair. This was agreed unanimously.

Action: Anne Scull

1147. Andrew Beech proposed thanks on behalf of the PCC to William Hopkinson, Christabel Panter and Peter Veasey, who are leaving the PCC once their membership of the Deanery Synod expires, for their valuable contributions over many years.

Date of Next Meeting: 19 July

The meeting ended at 21.15 with prayer.

ANNEX A

LEAF PROPOSAL FOR ST KATHERINE'S HALL

Introduction

A.1 LEAF was invited to consider whether or not it would be willing to take on a lease of St Katherine's Hall and, if so, what could LEAF initiate and facilitate as activities within the building. Based on this invitation several 'in confidence' conversations have been had with potential stakeholders and other interested supporters and parties. These parties include Ledbury Primary School, Ledbury Town Council, Talk Communities and LYAS (Youth Charity).

A.2 In addition, with the permission of St Michaels Rector and Churchwardens, TH also had an initial conversation with Chris Milton, Chief Operating Officer of Hereford Cathedral Chapter, about the possibility of LEAF leasing the building. There was a warm response to this initial contact and a more formal meeting has been set on 26 May to have further discussions.

Background

A.3 The use of St Katherines as a Church led community hub is not a new concept. Way back, in 2014, discussions were had with Hereford Cathedral Dean and Chapter about the potential development of St Katherine's along those lines. The vision for community use, at that time, was discussed and accepted in principle but not taken forward due to other changes taking place at St Michaels.

A.4 Over the past 8 years much of the 'mission' work in Ledbury has been forged by ecumenical working, formed out of prayer and cemented by the setting up of LEAF as a registered charity under the governance of Trustees representing the 4 main churches in Ledbury plus other Diocesan, wider ecumenical and business Trustees. Since inception LEAF has developed good community links and is held in high regard by both County and Town Councils, Primary Schools, Ledbury Healthcare, and the community itself, and has placed itself in a position to take on further development and expansion.

Opportunity

A.5 Although the potential project is in its infancy the various conversations that have taken place have thrown up the potential positive points:

- Talk Communities have been discussing with LEAF the potential for setting up a 'Superhub' in Ledbury and would wish LEAF to take a lead on this. This 'Superhub' opportunity comes with Capital Funding support. A 'scoping' conversation indicates that around £250k-£300k would be available to LEAF to invest at St Katherines.
- Youth Facility – LEAF, in conjunction with LYAS, have been seeking premises to run a youth facility in the Town. There may be a temporary provision sourced for the short-term but there still needs a better medium to long-term provision. There would be much support, both practically and financially for this provision to be made at a redeveloped St Katherines'. The Mayor and Town Clerk are giving their support to this and would take to full Council once LEAF is in the process of taking on a lease.
- LEAF's work at Ledbury Primary School has been well received and will be expanding in September this year to include the setting up of a Tots group as part of a plan to

employ a LEAF Family Support Worker at the school. The initial work would expand to include working directly with certain families in collaboration with the school. We believe that the opportunity at St Katherine's would enable LEAF, working with the school, to offer additional support to children and families. This is likely to be in the way of increased mental health, emotional and therapeutic support alongside an 'alternative provision' for selected children.

- LEAF has also had discussion with John Masefield High School about supporting Secondary School aged youngsters. Initially, LEAF is looking to support children in the 'transition' between Primary and Secondary, continuing its work with those children already being 'mentored' at Ledbury Primary School.

A.6 Talk Communities would not only offer Capital Funding but initial discussions have identified their willingness to help LEAF make this a 'sustainable' long-term project through the introduction of other community groups who would bring much needed revenue into the project. There may well be other funding also over time.

A.7 Early conversations have been had with Diocesan representatives and it is possible that Diocesan led initiatives may also bring additional funding for LEAF activities at St Katherines. There may also be some Diocesan activities that could take place at St Katherines, with Youth being a key focus for the immediate future.

A.8 The additional investment and resourcing that LEAF could enable would also make the building a far better equipped venue for church events and activities. LEAF would wish to honour existing St Michaels arrangements such as use by the Romanian Orthodox Church and agreed St Michaels activities.

Proposal

A.9 Given the opportunities identified above LEAF is now requesting the support and agreement of the PCC after discussion, in confirming the wish of the Rector and Churchwardens, that LEAF and SMAA formally approach the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral to propose that the existing lease between the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral and St Michaels Rector and Churchwardens be terminated, and that a new long-term lease be set up between Hereford Cathedral Chapter and LEAF to maximise the development opportunity at St Katherines.

St Katherines Hall

Background

B.1 At its meeting on 25 July 2018 the PCC agreed that discussion should be opened with the Almshouse Trustees to renegotiate the lease on St Katherines Hall. It was recognised that the existing lease was unfit for purpose in that it put too much liability on the Rector and Churchwardens and contained potentially onerous repairing obligations. Subsequent enquiries have shown that in any event the respective responsibilities of the Rector and churchwardens and the PCC are far from clear.

B.2 A small working group was formed to look at the lease and at potential future development of the hall. The working group suggested that a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) should be set up, at arm's length from the PCC, with trustees drawn from other churches and from the town to oversee the running of the hall and hold a new lease. LEAF was at that time not operational. However, first the lease needed to be renegotiated.

B.3 The working group produced a business plan for the hall and entered into discussion with the Almshouse Trustees. The main sticking point in the negotiation is that currently the tenants have security of tenure under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, and the new lease proposed by the trustees would remove that. However, the proposed new lease would have advantages and would provide a better base to proceed with improvements. The working group has sought legal advice on the new lease proposed by the Trustees but has been unable to find a solicitor with the relevant expertise willing to advise.

B.4 The PCC is now asked to consider whether the current lease should be surrendered and instead a new lease set up between the Almshouse Trustees and LEAF.

Comments

B.5 The hall currently operates at a loss. The main tenants are Mr Lomas (who sells Persian carpets) and the Romanian Church. SMAA has used the Hall twice in the last 12 months (pancake party and APCM). The Friends have also used the hall twice for events. We would want to see the Romanian Church protected and to have reasonable use of the hall for church events

B.6 Lettings are few, and improvements to the hall are needed if it is to be commercially viable. While the church could seek funding for this LEAF is possibly in a better position to do so.

B.7 The current lease is untenable and the view of the Rector and Churchwardens is that if we were to be unable to resolve the outstanding points on the proposed lease we would be forced to surrender the lease rather than continue on the current basis.

Keith Hilton Turvey
Cath Beech
David Houghton

St Katherines Hall – future options

C.1 The current situation is set out in paras B.1 – 3 of Annex B.

C.2 This note sets out the options for future action and some of the points the PCC may wish to bear in mind.

C.3 The Hall is currently owned by St Ethelburga's charity, which owns the Almshouses and other properties in the county. The Dean and Chapter act as Trustees. Clearly they can only act in line with their charitable objectives.

Option 1 – continue with the current lease

- The respective responsibilities of the PCC and the Rector and churchwardens would remain unclear.
- Potentially we could be faced with the cost of external repairs in the future.
- It would not be a sound base on which to seek grant funding etc for improvements.
- This would probably be unacceptable to the current Churchwardens and Rector.

Option 2 – continue to negotiate a new lease

- This would probably only be possible if we were to concede that we should give up rights under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 (this means that at the end of the lease term, some 70years from now, the lessors would have to renew the lease). This has previously been a sticking point but may now not be considered so significant.
- The new lease would pass the repairing obligations to the lessors, in return for some increase in rent, plus a share in profits.
- We would then have to consider what use we would make of the hall and how we could improve it. Our previous plan was to set up a CIO (a charity with limited liability with PCC and Community representation) to run the hall as a community resource with limited lettings. This was both broaden the community involvement and to limit the workload for the PCC. We would need to consider whether this is still appropriate and how this would tie in with the work of LEAF.
- We would also need to consider how to resource this work both financially and in terms of the additional workload.
- We would retain a parish hall, although if we were to establish a CIO management would be at arms length from the PCC.

Option 3 – negotiate a new lease with a sublease to LEAF

- We would still have to complete lease negotiations.
- We would need to consider how improvements could be funded. LEAF would need to consider if it would be able access grant funding if it was a sub tenant.
- If the sublease were to be terminated, would the church have to compensate LEAF for improvements they might have made?
- We would not lose complete control of the hall.

Option 4 – surrender the lease in order that a new lease could be set up between the Almshouse trustees and LEAF

- We would lose our Parish hall (although we could try and negotiate reasonable access for the church and also for the Romanian Church).
- We might want to ensure that the LEAF business plan was robust.

Option 5 – surrender the lease to the lessors, without considering future use

- We would lose our Parish Hall.
- It would be up to the St Ethelburga's charity to decide future use of the hall.

ANNEX D

Chorister Programme Proposal

D.1 The Chamber Choir has been running for over 2.5 years now, providing musical support and enhancement for 10am worship twice a month. Numbers seem to have stabilised at around 15 regular singers but it is proving very hard to attract good sopranos for these services. Those we have are loyal but vocally not very strong and it would transform the sound to have a couple of young choristers with strong voices.

D.2 I propose advertising at local schools this summer for up to two good voices to join us for these services and the attendant rehearsals in return for which SMAA will finance weekly singing lessons for them. The usual annual provision by peripatetic music staff runs to 30 half hour lessons a year at a standard rate of £30 per hour. This works out at £450 per chorister per annum. It may be possible to have both choristers learn with the same teacher in a double lesson thus reducing the cost by half.

D.3 Payment for lessons would be contingent on attending church choir rehearsals and services with a termly review from the Director of Music to assess progress and contribution. If we could find suitable candidates, the award would be by audition with an initial trial period of a term (September – December) extending to a year if satisfactory. Payment would be made from the Education or Heaton Funds.

Kate Cheetham

May 2023