



St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Parochial Church Council - 19 July 2023

Present: Keith Hilton-Turvey (Chair)
David Houghton (Churchwarden)
Cath Beech (Churchwarden)
Andrew Beech (Secretary)
Sue Cooper
Ian James
Sue Simpson
James Smith
Peter Williamson (LEAF: St Katherine's item only)

Apologies: Stephen Cheetham, Maria Dineen, Benjamin Hilton-Turvey,
Tony Hodder, Anne Scull, Peter Scull, Will Wake

1148. Keith Hilton-Turvey opened with Psalm 136 and prayer.

Minutes of meeting held on 17 May

1149. These were agreed unanimously.

Safeguarding

1150. Keith Hilton-Turvey reported that an issue had been raised, which had been discussed with the diocese. It had been concluded that no action needs be taken.

1151. The blockage on DBS checks has been lifted and Annie Lindon is working through them. It was confirmed that PCC members do not need a DBS check in respect of their PCC membership, but would do so if working separately with vulnerable adults or children and young people.

St Katherine's

1152. Peter Williamson reported that LEAF had held initial discussions with the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral with a view to taking on a lease of St Katherine's Hall, to replace that currently held by the rector and churchwardens. It was reported that the Dean was particularly enthused by the prospect of a wider community involvement. It was hoped that, under LEAF management, the hall could serve as a Community Hub. For this to happen, an expression of interest would have to be submitted by the end of the month. The PCC were asked to agree in principle for the lease to be transferred. Peter stated that,

to attract grant funding, the lease would need to be unencumbered, and that LEAF would be unable to grant the church a guarantee of their continuing use of the hall.

1153. In discussion concern was expressed that this may render the church unable to hold such events as it needs to in the hall. It could also render the church less visible to the people of Ledbury, with LEAF instead being seen to take centre stage as regards Christian witness in the community. Peter stressed that LEAF did not intend to replace any missional activity carried out by its member churches or take credit for such work.

1154. It was recognised that the hall had little future under the present arrangements. The church was unlikely to be able to attract funding or provide the resources to carry out the necessary improvements; neither could the church let the hall to LEAF as LEAF would then be unable to attract the necessary grant funding. Sue Cooper, seconded by Sue Simpson, proposed that the PCC support the bid for LEAF to take on the lease of St Katherine's Hall. This was agreed with five votes in favour, two against and no abstentions.

Vision and church awayday

1155. The church awayday will take place on 21 October in Lady Edith Hall, Tarrington. It will be led by Derek Chedzey and Mark Melliush. Charles Burgess will run two *PCC Tonight* training sessions at the church (dates to be confirmed). An invitation will be extended to other churches in the deanery.

Action: Churchwardens

Small groups co-ordinator

1156. Richard Nightingale had agreed to take on this post.

Website

1157. Benjamin and Keith Hilton-Turvey are considering how best to transfer streaming from the old to the new website.

Action: Benjamin Hilton-Turvey/Keith Hilton-Turvey

Finance

1158. On behalf of Stephen Cheetham, Cath Beech reported that the financial position of the church was not encouraging. Income was steady, but inflation was reducing the value of the church's funds. Consideration needs to be given to encouraging people to give more to the church, possibly by resurrecting Stewardship Sunday(s). It was recognised that the effect of the closure of the church office is not yet reflected in the figures presented.

Action: Stephen Cheetham

Fabric

1159. Andrew Beech reported that the contract for the roof valley repairs has been let. He is discussing a date for the work to commence with the contractor. Other items:

- Upper Room refurbishment and Chapter House catering facility: the church architects had promised plans for these within the next three weeks;
- Pew Rearrangement: A useful meeting had been had with interested parties. A further meeting with Kate Cheetham is required before a final plan can be drawn up. This should be ready for the September PCC meeting. It was agreed that the two long pew frontals should be retained, if suitable storage space can be found;

Action: Andrew Beech

- Trinity Altar: St Helen's, Hangleton, Sussex may wish to take the former Trinity altar. A PCC meeting to be held shortly in Hangleton is expected to agree the proposal. Both churches will require faculties, one to dispose of the altar, the other to accept it. Jenny Harrison is looking into the origins of the altar to enable a faculty to be applied for. Andrew Beech will consult the DAC about the process if nothing can be determined about the altar's origins;

Action: Andrew Beech

- Funerary Monuments: Andrew Beech has written to the conservators about the Lucy and Skinner monuments. Lord Biddulph has indicated that he is prepared to fund restoration of the two family monuments in greatest need of attention. A formal letter indicating this is awaited;

Action: David Houghton

- Sound Review: Keith Hilton-Turvey is investigating alternative suppliers: an update is planned for the next meeting.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

Moveable Objects

1160. David Houghton has completed an inventory of church silver, is seeking to liaise with the diocese (Sarah Girling) about reading the hallmarks and is investigating which of the pieces may be stored securely at the Cathedral.

Action: David Houghton

1161. Cath Beech continues to consider what floor covering might be most suitable for the Chapter House. Alternatively measures to deaden the sound, and to lessen the trip hazards posed by some ledger stones will be considered. David Houghton will dispose of the old carpet.

Action: Cath Beech/David Houghton

Other Business

1162. It was agreed unanimously that the church will participate in the Heritage Open Day in September. The Town Council will post church opening times on their website. It was hoped that stewards could be found to steward the church throughout the day.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/David Houghton

1163. Will Wake had proposed setting up a series of men's ministry events. This was received favourably. Andrew Beech will suggest that Will speak to Bill MacKenzie, who organised the former Men's Breakfasts.

Action: Andrew Beech

Date of Next Meeting: 20 September

The meeting ended at 20.58 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