



St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Parochial Church Council – 19 November 2025

Present: David Houghton (Chair)(Churchwarden)
Cath Beech (Churchwarden)
Andrew Beech
Maria Dineen
William Hopkinson
Ian James
Richard Nightingale
Anne Scull

Tim Keyes (volunteering item only)

Apologies: Keith Hilton-Turvey (Rector), Stephen Cheetham, Sue Cooper, Sue Simpson, Will Wake

1454. The meeting opened with Psalm 73: 23-28 and prayer.

Minutes of meeting held on 15 September

1455. These were agreed unanimously and signed.

Minutes of the Standing Committee on 3 November

1456. These were noted.

Volunteering

1457. Tim Keyes spoke to the paper at Annex A on behalf of the Volunteering Sub-Committee. He noted that many organisations, including secular ones, were finding it hard to fill volunteer roles. Various roles at St Michael's, including some key ones, remained unfilled. Tim stressed that volunteers should feel that they had the necessary knowledge and ability to carry out their roles, and for that purpose it was important that they be trained, that they meet others performing the same role and that they be duly thanked for what they do. Tim also noted that some volunteers have probably taken on too great a burden, and need some of the pressure to be taken off them.

1458. In discussion it was agreed that various methods of recruiting volunteers were available, but a quiet word on a one-to-one basis seems to work best. It was also felt that not enough publicity was given to who did what in the church.

1459. On being put to the vote all seven of the recommendations of the Volunteering Sub-Committee (see Annex A below) were agreed unanimously. Council members were asked to pray about who might fill the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator, and to bring suggestions to the next meeting.

Action: All PCC members

1460. Tim Keyes and the group were thanked for producing their report.

Safeguarding

1461. No outstanding safeguarding issues were reported. Maria Dineen had agreed to be the interface between the church and the diocese on safeguarding matters, and will check that the necessary DBS checks have been completed.

1462. The PCC recorded its thanks to Annie Lindon, outgoing Safeguarding Officer. Annie remains the verifier of DBS checks.

Community garden

1463. Further to her introduction of the subject at the September meeting, Maria Dineen proposed setting up a group in the New Year to produce ideas for adapting the churchyard to be a more environmentally friendly space, and to provide an area in which the community can relax and enjoy the quiet. She also proposed that God's Acre, a charity, be asked to survey the churchyard to establish what species might be present. To establish the full list might take a couple of years. Once this is known, ideas for how the churchyard could be enhanced could be developed, in conjunction with the wider community, including Ledbury Town Council. This was agreed unanimously.

Action: Maria Dineen

Abolition of Ledbury Group Ministry

1464. The Bishop had proposed formal abolition of the Ledbury group ministry, which had been established in 2017 in place of the former team ministry, but which had never got going. The PCC's views had been sought, but it had been made clear that the PCC had no veto over the proposal.

1465. William Hopkinson, who had been closely involved in setting up the pastoral scheme in 2017, regretted that the group ministry had never got off the ground. However, in discussion the PCC recognised that this was the case, and agreed that there was no point in attempting to resurrect it. Going forward into the vacancy, and thereafter a new rector, the PCC was enthusiastic about the prospect of the three benefices working together in a much more collaborative manner than hitherto. Andrew Beech would respond to the Bishop, indicating that the PCC had no objection to him making the proposed Order.

Action: Andrew Beech

Additional members of the PCC

1466. Andrew Beech explained that the PCC had been carrying four lay member vacancies since the APCM. Were volunteers to come forward to fill those posts, the PCC was, until two months prior to each year's APCM, able to fill them by simple vote.

1467. Sonia Bowen and Christine Walters had both asked to join the PCC. It was felt that both contributed considerably to the life of the church, and would be useful members of the PCC. Both were unanimously voted into membership. Their appointments will run only until the APCM in April 2026, after which both would need to seek nomination to the PCC in the usual manner. Andrew Beech will notify them of the result of the vote.

Action: Andrew Beech

Use of St Michael's by the Romanian church

1468. The Romanian church had asked to be able to use St Michael's for worship during January 2026, whilst the underfloor heating was installed in St Katherine's Hall. This had already been agreed by the PCC by email. The decision is formally noted here.

Future ecumenical services

1469. Maria Dineen asked that future ecumenical services feel more ecumenical, rather than each church appearing to do its normal "bit", one after the other. The churchwardens will discuss with MaryAnne Keyes (who represents St Michael's at Ledbury churches leaders' meetings) how these services are planned and will report back.

Action: Churchwardens

Finance

1470. A finance report prepared by Stephen Cheetham was noted.

Church office

1471. The diocese had notified the parish that it would no longer have the use of the church office in the rectory from the end of February 2026. This is because of a change of policy whereby rectories and vicarages are to be used solely for the accommodation of clergy and their families. Given the difficult and busy period facing St Michael's this insensitive decision by the diocese was regretted.

1472. The diocesan decision means that the church will need to relocate the office. The new administrator (Chloe Garner) would work part-time from home, and hence needed no office accommodation. However other equipment, such as a photocopier, the church computer and filing cabinets, would need to be relocated. It was agreed that, in the medium term, the office equipment should be relocated in the upper room, the refurbishment of which was an outstanding quinquennial recommendation.

1473. Until the refurbishment of the upper room could be accomplished, Maria Dineen kindly offered the use of a secure garage in Malvern to house church office equipment etc. This was accepted. It was agreed that a small group, consisting of the churchwardens,

Maria Dineen and Chloe Garner would advise on which of the existing office equipment needed to be retained long-term.

Action: Small group

Fabric

Heating

1474. Andrew Beech reported that the interim faculty providing for the installation of a refurbished boiler had been granted. The old boiler had been dismantled and removed, and the pipework within the nave and chancel flushed out. Work to install the replacement boilers was under way. Andrew was thanked for his work to secure the faculty.

Upper rooms

1475. In the light of the diocesan decision to eject the church from the church office (see above), it was agreed that work on the refurbishment of the upper rooms needed to be given greater priority. Andrew Beech will discuss the next stage with the church architect.

Action: Andrew Beech

1476. A response was still awaited to the faculty application. It was hoped that the church consultants could be put in direct touch with the DAC to iron out one difficulty that seems to have arisen.

Action: Andrew Beech

Catering

1477. The catering facilities in the church are wholly inadequate. It was agreed unanimously that a group would be set up, consisting of Sonia Bowen, Margaret Chapman (if available), Stephen Cheetham and Christine Walters, to advise on what was needed. If Margaret Chapman was unavailable, it was felt that Maggie MacKenzie should be asked to join the group. The group terms of reference were agreed unanimously and are set out at Annex B below. The churchwardens will contact the putative members of the group, to see whether they would serve on it.

Action: Churchwardens

Roof valley repairs

1478. It appeared that the contractor appointed to carry out this work had gone out of business. A tender from another contractor was significantly higher. Andrew Beech will discuss this with the church architect.

Action: Andrew Beech

Other business

1479. Five lent lunches are planned. The Lent Study Group is being set up.

1480. Kate Cheetham wishes to reduce the number of Sundays on which she plays by one per month, and exceptionally two. She will find, and pay out of her own remuneration, a replacement organist/pianist. This was agreed unanimously.

1481. The minor thefts from the church, reported at the previous meeting, were continuing. People were reminded to be careful about where they left things.

Date of Next Meeting: There will be a joint meeting with Eastnor PCC in the upper room of the Sitara restaurant, 19 High Street at 7.15pm on Wednesday, 3 December. The meeting will be chaired by the Archdeacon of Hereford, the Ven. Derek Chedzey, and is to familiarize the two PCCs of what needs to be done to recruit a replacement rector.

The next meeting for regular business will take place at 7.15pm on Monday, 19 January 2026 in the Chapter House.

The meeting ended at 21.09 with prayer.

Volunteering – report of the sub-committee

A: History

Tim Keyes presented a paper to the PCC in July 2024 expressing concern at how we are to find new volunteers to fill an increasing number of vacant roles in the church. He asked the PCC to consider how we can, as a church, devise a more efficient way of using our human resources. The PCC proposed the setting up of a subcommittee to review volunteering in the church. This committee met three times between May and September 2025. The need to come up with a practical strategy appears all the more important in the light of the decision of the Rector to retire since (a) it is very important that the church continues the many important branches of its ministry during the interregnum, and (b) the Rector himself oversaw a number of tasks which will need to be picked up by others.

B: Biblical base

Paul sets out in Romans 12.4-6 a theme that is common in the New Testament letters: “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us”.

C: Terms of reference

1. To identify the challenges that we face in maintaining an adequate number of volunteers to cover the range of the church's activities.
2. To identify those areas of the church's ministry and statutory functions where additional volunteers are needed.
3. To consider how best to retain existing volunteers
4. To list which vacancies are a priority and why
5. To outline proposals as to how these could be filled

D: Evidence base

The subcommittee used the following sources of evidence to assist in the brief:

- The Electoral role
- A list of volunteer opportunities
- A list of volunteer teams within the church
- A survey sent out in August 2025 to all volunteers asking for their views and experiences
- A short AI generated paper presenting the scientific evidence for factors that influence recruitment and retention of volunteers

E: Our progress with the terms of reference:

1. Challenges:
 - a) Numbers attending services at our church have been in decline, and the average age is increasing.
 - b) Several of our church family are at an age, or in a state of health, which inhibits them from engaging in volunteering in the way that they did in the past
 - c) There are people who have been volunteers in the past but who may now feel that they have “done their bit”.
 - d) A number of previously active members have now left the congregation.
 - e) There is not a strong culture of thanks / encouragement.
 - f) Our subcommittee identified that there is no single avenue for members of our church family to be informed about (i) what volunteer opportunities are available, (ii) who to contact about them, (iii) what level of commitment is required. The loss of a parish magazine has meant that there is not the regular focus on activities in the church that there used to be.
 - g) Currently, emails via iKnow, coordinated by Christine Walters, are the main source of communication about a range of activities and needs within the church. The strength of iKnow is in providing information. Email, however, is not likely to be an effective means of appealing for volunteers.
2. Areas where additional volunteers are needed
 - a) For the list of statutory and essential roles within SMAAA, see 4(a) below.
 - b) Several other roles were identified via the survey questionnaire in which current volunteers are either scheduled to retire or have decided to retire. These include the Verger role, and several PCC membership roles.
 - c) We need to add to the numbers in the following teams: leading intercessions; communion assistants (NB both roles need careful training and support)
 - d) There is currently only one person in the Communication team.
 - e) As part of any consideration of individuals, we should look carefully at the workload of the busiest people
 - f) We should consult team leaders about their volunteer needs
3. How to retain existing volunteers:
 - a) Training and mentoring where needed
 - b) Support for team leaders
 - c) Appreciation
 - d) Sharing the load to help the overloaded
 - e) An annual review of everyone’s contribution
 - f) The option to change roles and not get stuck in one role for too long (unless you are happy with that)
4. List priority vacancies
 - a) We must ensure, to the best of our ability, that statutory roles are filled and adequately supported (Churchwardens, PCC Treasurer, PCC Secretary, Data protection officer, Health and Safety Officer, Safeguarding officer)
5. Outline proposals about how to fill vacancies
 - a) See recommendations below

F: Key points from an AI generated paper considered by the subcommittee on evidence for factors that influence recruitment and retention of volunteers:

- a) Tailoring recruitment messages to align with volunteers' motivations increases the likelihood of participation
- b) Volunteers are more likely to sign up when roles are clearly defined, and expectations are manageable
- c) Satisfaction and perceived organisational support are strong predictors of continued volunteering
- d) Recognition improves morale and retention, especially among long-term volunteers
- e) A strong sense of belonging to the organization or cause increases loyalty.
- f) Poor experiences during initial volunteering can significantly reduce likelihood of returning

In practical terms, SMAAA needs to consider:

- a) Aligning volunteer opportunities with motivation and interests of individuals
- b) Ensuring, as far as is possible, that volunteer roles are meaningful and wellstructured
- c) Recognising and supporting volunteers consistently
- d) Fostering community and inclusion (eg by holding one or more events of celebration / appreciation each year)
- e) Collecting feedback from volunteers regularly (at least once a year) and adapting practices accordingly

G: Outcomes of the survey

The survey results will be made available to all those who took part and to all members of the PCC. Maria Dineen will provide these results separately from this report. These are some of the clearest outcomes of the survey:

- i. 60% of volunteers who responded to the survey feel valued or very valued
- ii. Of the 40% who either had no feelings of being valued or not valued, and those who feel valued or not valued, the lack of overt appreciation appears a contributing factor alongside a lack of encouragement and a seeming lack of interest from the church leadership
- iii. A significant number of volunteers are undertaking five and more volunteer activities ranging from regular multiple times a week, to weekly/monthly commitments
- iv. Most people (especially in the more public roles) feel appreciated by the congregation or by their team leaders
- v. We should take mentoring and training more seriously for certain roles (eg doing intercessions / communion assisting / stewarding / leading worship / PCC membership).
- vi. A frequent comment from respondents related to trust. They did not seek recognition, nor praise, and trusted that their contribution to the church was valued
- vii. In terms of how the leadership / PCC can set an example, key phrases in survey responses were: building relationships with volunteers / not taking them for granted / showing interest
- viii. There is a strong theme around the importance of people feeling part of a fellowship (and then involvement will follow)

A list of specific suggestions coming from those who took part in the survey can be found at Appendix 1.

Recommendations of our subcommittee

1. That the PCC identifies and appoints an individual to act in the capacity of overall Volunteer Coordinator. Such a role will need to be clearly defined, with the core objectives of ensuring:
 - i. that the volunteer roles in the church are known about and attractive to those with the interest and capacity to be involved in the church
 - ii. that all volunteer groups via their leaders feel recognised, supported and valued (see proposed role specification attached)
2. That the volunteer coordination role specification is accepted
3. That the PCC has the topic of volunteering (with a brief report from the Volunteering Coordinator) on a PCC agenda three times each year (i.e. at alternate meetings).
4. That a plan is agreed for how the current unfilled statutory roles in the church might be filled. The church has a legal obligation for these, and the PCC must therefore make this a priority
5. That they note and address the fact that a few people are carrying an unreasonable burden, or breadth of, responsibility.
6. That a strategy is developed that makes explicit the valuable place volunteering has in healthy church family, including the potential benefit for the volunteer as well as the church. The objective of such a strategy must be to increase the number of regular volunteers.
7. That one or more members of the PCC (or of others not on the PCC who might be particularly well suited to the task) are asked to find out from regular members of our church family who appear not to be engaged in any volunteer activity what obstacles prevent them from doing so. Understanding what prevents people from becoming actively involved with their church family is as important as understanding why others do embrace volunteer roles.

Appendix 1

Suggestions arising from the volunteering survey

1. Picture board of leaders and teams / A publicised list on a board of who does what roles
2. Clear job descriptions for some roles (including challenges and rewards)
3. A vacancies board to advertise gaps in volunteer roles that need filling
4. A "Freshers Fair" type event (rather like community day) when each volunteering activity could be represented and people could ask the representative questions.
5. Regular highlighting in services of the different volunteering roles
6. WhatsApp groups for larger teams
7. A buddying system (i.e. someone new to a role can work alongside someone who is experienced in that role in the early stages)
8. Give a higher priority to training Make volunteering more fun
9. Match the right role to the right person
10. Get paid help for some of what needs to be done
11. Monitor the load on individuals (annual feedback form?)
12. Stress to the congregation principal of tithing of time as well as resources, and that volunteering, if shared around, is not onerous.
13. Break down some roles so they are shared
14. Foster a stronger sense of fellowship so people feel more involved
15. Explain how less high-profile roles fit into the bigger picture
16. Volunteer "thank you day" once a year
17. Foster a sense that you are valued if you take on a volunteering role (and not just left to get on with it)
18. A clear time-limit to each term as a volunteer so that you do not feel stuck in a role because there is no replacement
19. The Rector and PCC (or a volunteer coordinator) noting newcomers to the church and considering, after an appropriate time, what roles they might be asked to fill.
20. Keep an up-to-date list of who does what for various purposes (so we can appreciate the roles people play / so we know whom to approach with a request etc)
21. Personal approaches rather than appeals to the whole congregation
22. Prioritise Home Group membership as a way of making people feel more included (and therefore more likely to help)
23. Consider little incentives (e.g. bacon rolls after church cleaning)

Appendix 2

The role of Volunteering Coordinator

1. Report to the PCC three times per year on issues relating to volunteering, including essential roles to be filled
2. Maintain up-to-date records of who performs which roles in the church
3. Liaise with team leaders to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to run activities, and that training is offered as appropriate
4. Where resources are required, and not readily available, to bring such issues to the attention of the PCC Secretary and Chair
5. Consider realistic and achievable ways in which volunteers can be thanked and appreciated
6. Visit activities on a rotational basis (and encourage fellow PCC members to do the same)
7. In partnership with the Communications team and the PCC, devise a communications strategy to cover (i) the advertising of roles (with job descriptions where appropriate), (ii) the celebration of the range of activity in the church, and (iii) awareness of who does what.

Line manager: the Rector (or churchwardens during the interregnum)

Term of office: initially 1 year with the option to extend to three years

NB The person doing this role should probably not be doing any other volunteering role in the church. They may need a small team to work with them.

Catering Advisory Group

Terms of reference

1. To advise the PCC on (a) the minimum catering facilities necessary for the church to be able to provide its existing level of catering, both to the congregation and to visiting organisations using the church for occasional events, and (b) any additional desirable elements that would enhance the level of catering provision. In the case of (b) the Group should provide an explanation of why each element is thought desirable and the extent to which use of it might be expected. This is to enable the PCC to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of each.
2. In all cases the Group should ensure that its recommendations meet all legislative and good practice requirements for the provision of catering.
3. The Group is not asked to advise on where, within the church premises, such facilities should be located, nor details as to preferred make, model etc. of equipment.
4. The Group is asked to bear in mind that Ledbury has a considerable number of commercial catering businesses, and that the PCC does not wish to be seen to be operating in competition with established businesses.
5. The Group is asked to present its final report to the PCC at its meeting on 18 March 2026.

**Parochial Church Council
November 2025**