St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Parochial Church Council – 21 September 2026

Present:	David Houghton	(Chair)(Churchwarden)
	Cath Beech	(Churchwarden)
	Andrew Beech	
	Sonia Bowen	
	Sue Cooper	
	Maria Dineen (remote access)	
	Kevin Hewison	
	Georgina Hicks	
	William Hopkinson	
	Ian James	
	Richard Nightingale	
	Anne Scull	
	Peter Veasey	
	Lucy Huxley (Mobility ramp item only)	

Apologies: Stephen Cheetham, Will Wake

1606. David Houghton welcomed members to the new PCC and thanked Sue Simpson and Christine Walters for their service. He opened the meeting with Matthew 9: 9-13 and 28:19/20 and prayer.

Minutes of meeting held on 22 July

1607. These were agreed unanimously and signed.

Minutes of Standing Committee meeting on 7 September

1608. These were noted.

Mobility ramps

1609. None of the current ramps giving access to various parts of the church comply with existing legislation. Furthermore, it was important that all should be equipped with handrails, which was not the case at present. It was agreed that the three ramps to be replaced should be:

- From the north aisle into the meeting room

- From the north aisle to Trinity
- From the Chapter House to the car park

1610. Replacing these ramps with longer ramps, with side guides for wheelchairs and mobility scooters, and handrails for use by those able to walk with some difficulty would also solve another problem identified, namely that those reliant on walking sticks, frames or rollators cannot access the toilets for lack of a handrail.

1611. It was also agreed that the ramp from the south aisle to St Anne's, removed recently, should not be replaced because of the low footfall into St Anne's. Furthermore, the wholly unsatisfactory ramp from St Anne's into the chancel should be removed without replacement. It was noted that the need for these ramps would be revisited should the new rector wish to make more use of St Anne's.

1612. A quote had been received from TPG Disable Aids Ltd. of Hereford. The company are a respected local supplier of, *inter alia*, access ramps. They have quoted £4,247.60 + VAT for the supply and fitting of the three ramps. This comes with full after-sales support. The three ramps would each be 120cm wide; the ramp into Trinity would have one handrail on the left-hand side (as there is already a handrail on the right-hand side), and the ramp from the Chapter House would have a handrail on the right-hand side, as ramps at fire exits are only allowed to have one handrail. This would require the existing fire extinguisher to be moved. This would be relocated to the south wall under the light switches.

1613. The third ramp, that into the meeting room, would have handrails on both sides. Each of the ramps would be approximately one foot longer than the existing ramps, which would reduce the gradient and make them easier to use. The ramps would be permanently fixed into the stonework. The handrails would be integral to the ramps, and would not need separate fixing into stonework or woodwork. The handrails to be supplied to St Michael's would be grey in colour.

1614. Other potential suppliers had been considered, but were either more expensive than TPG, or else their product came with no after-sales service, which was undesirable.

1615. It was pointed out that grey handrails might pose difficulties for the partially-sighted. Yellow would be brighter and more visible. Recognizing that the existing handrails were black, Andrew Beech will consult the DAC about this.

1616. Two other proposals had emerged from the work on this: (a) the need for an alarm in the disabled toilet, and (b) the idea of a sensor on the inner porch doors that would open both should anyone need to use those doors. These will be investigated further.

1617. Andrew Beech proposed, seconded by Georgina Hicks, acceptance of the TPG quote for the ramps, and that a faculty should be applied for. This was agreed unanimously. Andrew will also investigate the possibility of grant aid from the CofE Parish Accessibility Fund.

Action: Andrew Beech

Safeguarding

1617. Because of technical difficulties linking the meeting to Maria Dineen (who was at a remote location), this item was deferred to the next meeting.

Installation of Rev. Sarah Hillman

1618. Much work had been done in conjunction with the Bishop's Chaplain to organise this service. In the absence of a Rural Dean, Kevin Hewison (as Lay Co-Chair of the Deanery Synod) will have a role in the service. Hymns and other music
have been agreed with Sarah, readings still have been agreed with Sarah and Bishop Richard.

1619. Even though the potential list of invitees is long, it was stressed that this would not be a civic service, and that members of the St Michael's and Eastnor congregations (and of Sarah Hillman's existing churches) must feel welcome to attend. Sonia Bowen will act as front of house, and Helen I'Anson will organise the refreshments afterwards. The PCC agreed the list of those to be invited to the service, and that an invitation will also appear in the pew sheet.

Action: Churchwardens

Volunteers

1620. Sonia Bowen had prepared a master-list of volunteers. There was some discussion about whether the safeguarding arrangements might be off-putting for potential volunteers.

1621. There had been no progress with the paper about employing a cleaner.

Action: Cath Beech

Concert bookings

1622. There had been some issues lately with those organizing concerts assuming that the church would provide someone to unlock and lock the church on those occasions. Ian James proposed, seconded by Andrew Beech, that it should be a requirement that those booking concerts also made arrangements for opening and locking the church. Otherwise the booking will not be accepted. This was agreed unanimously.

Deanery

1623. Kevin Hewison reported that the diocese is planning to restructure the way in which parishes are managed, including its deaneries. A roadshow will take place in each deanery. That for the Ledbury Deanery will take place in St Peter, Withington on 10 November at 7p.m., at which Ven. Derek Chedzey will explain the proposed arrangements. All are encouraged to attend.

Finance

1624. In the absence of the treasurer, the PCC noted the finance report. Ian James asked why only £4,000 had been paid out in charitable giving, whereas the PCC had agreed to give £6,000. Richard Nightingale asked why there was no entry for concert fees in the accounts. David Houghton will raise these questions with Stephen Cheetham. He will also speak to Ayo Adewale about encouraging greater giving.

Action: David Houghton

1625. Both Bill MacKenzie and Michael Gallagher had given a lot of their time to the church during the vacancy, and had provided much support to the churchwardens. William Simmonds, too, had conducted many services, especially recently. David Houghton proposed, seconded by Cath Beech, that Bill and Michael each be given a personal gift of £500, and William a case of wine. This was agreed unanimously.

Action: Stephen Cheetham

Food safety

1626. Because of the communications difficulties in reaching Maria Dineen, and the absence of Will Wake, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

Net Zero

1627. Andrew Beech, Will Wake and Ian Mather had had a very useful meeting with Neil Harrison of Reheat Ltd, (technical advisers to the CofE Net Zero Programme). Neil had recommended that a detailed heat loss/airflow survey be carried out, to make recommendations as to measures to mitigate the losses. If successful, this should reduce the amount of heating needed when the gas boiler is replaced. Andrew has asked Matt Vaughan (church architect) to commission such a study.

Fabric

1628. Andrew Beech reported that work on the floor of the western upper room was complete, and that the work on the roof gutters was underway. However, the roof work had revealed the need to repair the lead in the northern water spout on the west front of the church, which has failed completely, leading to some erosion of the stonework. Two options had been proposed for the repair (see Annex). Sue Cooper proposed, seconded by Georgina Hicks, that option 2 be adopted. This was agreed unanimously.

Action: Andrew Beech

1629. Matthew Vaughan had submitted plans for the repair of the churchyard gate pillars, which needed attention. It was agreed that this work was of lower priority than other items, but that it should be kept under review in the event of the damage to the gateposts becoming significantly worse.

Action: Fabric Sub-Committee

1630. David Houghton reported that Age Concern had replaced the planters around the church. He proposed, seconded by Kevin Hewison, that a donation of £50 be made to Age Concern. This was agreed unanimously.

Action: Stephen Cheetham

Sound/projection

1631. No progress to report.

Other business

1632. Ian James reported that the Friends were proposing much better interpretation within the church, including the use of QR codes. But they were having difficulty finding the volunteers to take this forward.

1633. David Houghton agreed to a request from Sue Cooper that the WRDG put members' names, and not just their initials, in the WRDG minutes.

Action: David Houghton

1634. It was agreed unanimously that Fr Thomas Regan should be asked to lead the Advent Quiet Day, which will be held, as usual, at the Catholic Church in New Street.

1635. Sonia Bowen will contact Ledbury Community Action about providing transport to evensong at Hereford Cathedral on 11 October, which is to be led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Whether or not this can be arranged, the service will be advertised at SMAA.

Action: Sonia Bowen

Dates

1636. It was agreed that meetings in 2027 will be held on: Monday 18 January, Wednesday 24 March, Monday 17 May, Wednesday 21 July, Monday 20 September, Wednesday 17 November.

1637. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 25 November at 7.15pm in the Chapter House. **Please note that this is a change from the previously agreed date.**

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm with the Grace.

ANNEX

Repairs required at the west end of the roof

1. The work to replace the flashbanding in the two roof gutters is well under way. However, the work has uncovered a more serious issue. The lead in the northern of the two water spouts on the west front of the church has failed completely, compounded by pigeon damage to the surrounding leadwork. This has allowed water to ingress behind it, which has in turn eroded the stonework. The Fabric Sub-Committee has agreed a sum of £150 + VAT for an emergency repair for clearing behind and re-forming the lead to the outlet. This will stabilize the problem until a full repair can be carried out, which will require scaffolding.

2. There are two options for this full repair:

Option 1
Remove blockage and re-dress leadwork.
Install timber batten to keep flashing from coming in on itself.
Install new lead gutter onto original and weld onto original gutter.
Requires scaffolding on front elevation for access.

Total cost: Labour, Scaffolding Access and materials - £4,900.00

Option 2
Remove lead outlet section cutting it back to a good section of lead in gutter.
Install expiation joint to join together if possible.
Remove front shoot and repair, to be re-used welded onto new gutter lead.
Using lime-based mortar repair any defects in outlet gully.
Ensure clear fall with no dips on leadwork in gully section.
Requires scaffolding access to front elevation for access.

Total cost labour, Scaffolding Access and materials - £6,300.00

3. The Fabric Sub-Committee believe that the second of these two options would provide better long-term stability to the area in question. Option 1 would provide a good solution, but would primarily buy time, as a repeat of the problems currently being experienced could be expected eventually. In the end option 2 would be required in any event. The Sub-Committee therefore recommend that option 2 be accepted. **The PCC is recommended to agree this recommendation**.

Fabric Sub-Committee

September 2026