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*St Albans and Welwyn Circuit, Beds, Essex and Herts District*

Minister: Rev Andrew Prout, 16 Gainsborough Avenue, St Albans, Herts AL1 4NL | 01727 851834

Minutes of Church Council

Tuesday 9th March 2021 7.45pm at Hatfield Road via Zoom

**Apologies** received from: Val Parker, Peter Wallace, Freda Gray, Rosemary Fletcher

**Attended** Andrew Prout, (AP) Angela Spriggs (AS) (minute taker), Joe Kinchenton (JK), Ros Hancock (RH), Chris Hancock (CH), Eric Bridgstock (EB), Graham Danbury (GD), Joanna Rose (JR), Gina Woodhead (GW), Joe Kitchenton (JK), Stuart Johnson (SJ), Denise Willingham (DW), Angela Andrews (AA), Caroline Tough (CT), Chris Kitchin (CK), Lianne Weidmann. (LW)

1. **Devotions were held**. AP remembered and gave thanks for the lives of those who had attended HRMC or MRMC and their groups who had died recently. He thought of Betty Burdett ahead of Geoff Burdett’s upcoming funeral. He named Sheila Wallace, Sheila Fowler, Margaret Tims, who attended Daycare. AP noted that it has been a difficult time for both HRMC and MRMC where there have been 8 deaths in 6 weeks.
2. The **Membership of the Church Council** was agreed as correct.
3. The **Minutes of the Way Forward meeting on 3rd February 2021** were approved without amendment.
4. **Appointments and vacancies.**

AP noted that the Church has continuing vacancies for Sunday Club coordinator and Babies and Toddlers leader. He proposed that this could be discussed at a Church Stewards meeting.

1. **Letters of greeting and support:**

AP stated that he has sent messages of support and passed on the condolences of the Church to the families who have been bereaved, Sheila Fowler, Sheila Wallace, Geoff Burdett. He asked if there were any other messages or letters we might send at this time. None others were mentioned.

1. **Matters Arising not appearing elsewhere and Action Tracker**

The updated Action tracker was noted with a minor correctional amendment.

**Reopening the church following COVID restrictions**

AP went through the proposals as set out in the pre-circulated Report of the COVID group. These were that the Church should open for private prayer from 14th March and hold services from Palm Sunday (28th March). He stated that around the Circuit most churches were looking to open on Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday. This was in line with the National Restrictions roadmap date of 29th March when the ‘stay at home’ guidance is due to be removed. **The Church Council agreed to the above proposals relating to opening.**

AP sought Council guidance on whether the Church should hold one or two (identical) Sunday morning services during the remaining COVID restrictions. Two services would be held on the first Sunday of the month as per the normal plan. It was noted that, based on previous numbers (40-45 a week), the worship centre could not accommodate all attendees in one service with social distancing, but having two services (as happened previously) placed an additional burden on stewards, preachers, service supporters and worship leaders. The following options were set out:

* two identical services as previously so that all could sit in the worship centre
* one service with an overflow into the hall

**The Church Council had unanimous consensus to hold two services as before**. It was felt that the hall was not sufficiently inviting and people would stop coming. There were also ways and means of reducing the burden on preachers where necessary, including streaming the recorded service.

**AP stated that he would send a letter out to the Congregation informing them of the Church opening and of the progress of the Way Forward discussion which would be sent out with the next Notices.**

**7. Matters for Circuit, District and Connection.**

**Circuit meeting**

AP reported from the Circuit Meeting held on 2nd March 2021. HRMC representatives to the Circuit meeting were JR, CH, DW and AP. He stated that the Circuit meeting approved the Circuit accounts. AP reported on two forthcoming visits mentioned at the Circuit meeting and also referred to in the agenda:

* An evening with the Vice President of Conference Mrs. Carolyn Lawrence 160321 8.00pm ‘Discovering and Using your Gifts’
* Visit of President of Conference Rev Sonia Hicks on 10th October at MRMC, at the 10.30am Sunday Service. AP noted that the President of Conference visited each District about once every four years.

There will be a Circuit meeting to discuss and vote on the Way Forward paper on 25th March.

SJ reported that Rev Paul Seymour had been appointed as minister at the LEP at Panshanger. SJ noted that his Welcome Service would take place on 24th May. He stated that this was encouraging, and positive news for Panshanger.

It was noted that the Circuit Minutes will be sent round when ready.

**Discussion of paper *‘The Way Forward - Proposal to Circuit Meeting March 2021 – Final’***

AP introduced a discussion of proposals set out the pre-circulated document ‘*The Way Forward - Proposal to Circuit Meeting March 2021 – Final’*(appended).

As invited two responses had been received before the meeting. PW stated that he was supportive of all the proposals except that the St Albans section should adopt the De Havilland work. CK had raised a request for more information on the De Havilland project, and for more work to be done to set out the activities of each minister to enable the Church to determine what help the minister needed.

AP stated that anyone who wanted copies of the feedback from all 10 churches could send a request to AS, who can provide them when they are made available.

The Council was asked to vote on 10 proposals set out in the document:

***Proposal 1:*** *‘It is proposed that the De Havilland Project as currently constituted is closed from July 2022, and that the responsibility for the retained Salisbury Village work is transferred to the St Albans section on the above basis’.*

It was noted that the Church Council had previously expressed concerns about taking on the De Havilland project. The Church Council noted that it was unable to express an informed opinion as it lacked sufficient knowledge of the project. AP noted that MRMC had raised similar concerns at their Church Council. They had voted on the basis that ‘*details are subject to detailed discussion with the two churches in the St. Albans section*’ [from the Way Forward paper].

It was noted that the proposed transfer of the De Havilland project to the St Albans section was connected to that section’s proposed share of the Deacon’s time after 2022. The Hatfield section was unable to support the De Havilland project.

AP stated that work was needed to set out a proposal for the Deacon’s work within the St Albans section. At a joint stewards meeting it was agreed that a paper would be circulated to both churches describing the De Havilland project, its potential model post 2022, potential support needed, financial arrangements and where joint responsibilities lies. He stated that a joint Council meeting with MRMC would be held on 21st April to discuss the role. Linda Kinchenton would attend. Papers would be circulated in advance. An informed decision would be made at that meeting.

CK raised a number of queries to be addressed in due course:

* clarity about the meanings of ‘Salisbury Village’ and the ‘De Havilland project’ referred to in papers
* The impact of local parking restrictions have on the project
* If the manse is used for more activity, does it require a ‘change of use’ application. RH stated that this has been looked into previously. No change of use was needed.
* A query about the fact that the Chaplaincy work previously done by Nina disappeared. It was stated that Nina had left and the work had left with her.
* Clarity about what St Albans support might look like.

AP noted these points so can be addressed in due course at the meeting in April.

DW sought clarity on what would happen if the St Albans section decided it was not feasible to support the De Havilland project. SJ stated that the discussion so far was on the basis that the St Albans section now support it. If St Albans were unable to do so, the Circuit would have to think an alternative way, for instance look at another part in the Circuit, or not support it at all. There had been no detailed consideration of a contingency.

DW expressed the view that the Church Council should give serious consideration to supporting the De Havilland project in view of its indicated willingness to support people on the margins.

EB stated that more information was needed about the financial implications and the cost of resourcing the De Havilland project.

CH stated that the driver for bringing the De Havilland project under the remit of particular churches was to support Linda’s work through the normal management structure of Methodism, with the opportunity to offer extra lay support if feasible.

DW noted that a paper on Linda’s work had been circulated to the Circuit meeting and could be circulated to the Council.

The view was expressed that proposal 1 constituted two parts, one that the De Havilland project should be closed in its current form in 2022, and the other that responsibility for the retained Salisbury Village work is transferred to the St Albans section on the ‘above basis’ (the ‘above basis’ being that the approval was subject to the Council receiving more information about the De Havilland project and being satisfied that this move was feasible). It was acknowledged that all were in agreement with the first part, but the Council lacked sufficient information on the second. It was noted that the Church Council was required to vote on the proposal in its entirety and could propose changes to the Circuit meeting if required.

The Council voted as follows: 6 in favour of the proposal; 5 against. **Proposal carried but the closeness of the vote was noted. It was agreed that the closeness of the vote should be reported to Circuit and a note made that the support was contingent of further information and discussion about the project.**

***Proposal 2: ‘****It is proposed that the four ministers should be three presbyters and a deacon allocated to the areas detailed above from 1st September 2022’.*

**This was unanimously supported by the Council. Proposal carried.**

***Proposal 3:*** *‘It is proposed that from September 1st 2022 the Superintendency is allocated to the presbyter with responsibility for the Hertsmere section (SJPB, Shenley and Radlett United Free Church)’.*

**This was unanimously supported by the Council. Proposal carried.**

***Proposal 4:*** ‘*It is proposed that a group is established to create a fresh profile for the Deacon role to be used for the forthcoming re-invitation or stationing as appropriate. This group will be appointed by the CLT and include representatives of the churches in the Welwyn Hatfield and St Albans sections plus two circuit stewards’.*

AP stated that the Church Stewards had had some discussions and ideas about Deacon’s work, and that there would be further meetings with MRMC and HRMC Stewards over the next few weeks to pare down what the deacon can do within 5 sessions allocated to St Albans per week. AP noted that LK would have input into the conversation as to what might be feasible. SJ noted that a team of relevant people needed to be put together to look at the Deacon’s profile. It will look at all the Deacon’s activities.

The Council voted as follows: 9 supported the proposal, 1 not supportive. **Proposal carried.**

***Proposal 5:*** ‘*It is proposed that the Circuit Meeting and individual churches finalise and adopt these arrangements’.*

The arrangements relate to the revision of service times, and the preparedness of churches to have more local arrangements where necessary to ensure that the preaching plan is covered. It was noted that the arrangements would make very little difference to HRMC.

The Council voted as follows: 11 in support, 0 not in support. **Proposal unanimously carried.**

***Proposal 6: ‘****Having reviewed options it is proposed that the Allendale manse, refurbished appropriately, be retained at the present time and is let on a commercial basis for a minimum period of 3 years from Sept 2022’.*

The Council voted as follows: 10 in support, 0 against. **Proposal unanimously carried.**

***Proposal 7:* ‘***It is proposed that:*

*(i) The current job specification of Circuit Administrator is reviewed again by a small group and that a permanent Administrator is then appointed as soon as conditions allow*

*(ii) The group then researches the need for further support and recommends the way in which these services are provided*

*(iii)The Circuit Administrator remains based at Hatfield Road MC’.*

It was noted that in practice i and ii would be looked at together by the same group of people.

The Council voted as follows: 12 in support, 0 against. **Proposal unanimously carried.**

***Proposal 8:* ‘***It is proposed that the Circuit adopts these figures as the basis for its financial planning, on which the usual annual budgeting process can be based’.*

The Council voted as follows: 11 in support, 0 against. **Proposal unanimously carried.**

***Proposal 9:*** ‘*It is proposed that the Circuit Meeting encourages and supports the churches in pursuing these matters as priorities’*

The matters set out proposed ways of working, including that the Circuit would encourage HRMC and MRMC to continue to explore ways of working together.

The Council voted as follows: 12 in support, 0 against. **Proposal unanimously carried.**

***Proposal 10:*** ‘*It is proposed that the CLT commences work on the profile for the Superintendent role with a target date of completion by 1st June 2021, and for St Albans and Welwyn/Hatfield sections with a target date for completion by 1st November 2021’.*

RH stated that these activities were normal parts of Methodist stationing practice. This was conceded.

The Council voted as follows: 10 in support, 0 against. **Proposal unanimously carried.**

AP checked that issues raised by CK had been covered. CK stated that they had been covered as long as his points were taken on board that it was not possible to answer the question what presbyters need, unless it is known what presbyters do.

***Green issues and People on the Margins: Church Council’s proposed response to the Circuit***

The Circuit had requested responses from each Church regarding two proposals:

* That churches consider their approach to green issues
* That churches consider how their work with and support of people and communities on the margins.

It was noted that DW and RH had compiled the paper ‘*Green issues and People on the Margins: Church Council’s proposed response to the Circuit’* setting out HRMC’s starting point of view to this discussion. RH highlighted an upcoming Thinking Evening at MRMC by a representative from Arocha, details to be circulated. This related to Sustainable St Albans. RH also noted that the Salisbury Village work was a means by which the Church could support people on the margins.

AP thanked RH and DW on their work in producing this paper. He noted it as something that the Church could take forward.

The Council voted on whether to adopt the paper as their submission to the Circuit.

11 voted in favour. **The paper was unanimously adopted.**

1. **Reports to the Church Council**

Reports from the Senior Steward, the Children and Families Worker, the Children and Families Worker management group, the lay employment group, the Pastoral Secretary and the Worship Consultation Group were noted and received with thanks. JR, as safeguarding officer, stated that she was about to undertake training on how to run online safeguarding training so that such training could be updated as necessary. AP was pleased to announce the appointment of an Anna Chaplain, Maggie Dodd. The proposed start date was the end of April (part time) moving to full time in August to allow time for Maggie to wind down her business activities as a consultant.

**Property and Finance: Replacement of boiler**

EB presented a report from the Property and Finance Committee setting out proposals for replacement of the Church’s heating system for the Sanctuary and Aldersgate Lounge. The Property Committee had obtained three quotations for due diligence. The report proposed that Dunphy Ecclesiastical, a specialist church heating supplier, be engaged. AP noted that Dunphy Ecclesiastical had provided a slightly higher quote than other companies but the reasons for accepting the higher quote were set out in the report. These were on the basis of anticipated quality of work and reliability (based on references).

The Church Council were asked to vote on the proposal that the Church engages Dunphy Ecclesiastical to replace heating system and lounge

13 voted in favour, 0 against. **The proposal was carried.**

It was proposed that the church used some of the monies it had received from legacies for this major project. It was clarified that there were no restrictions on the particular legacies that would be drawn upon. It was proposed that the Church budgeted for £33,000, with £15,000 from restricted funds (recently legacies) and the remainder from General Funds. It was confirmed that there were no restrictions preventing use of these legacies for major projects such as this.

**In a vote the proposal to budget as set out above was carried.**

DW and AP expressed thanks to EB for his substantial work chasing up quotations, engaging with contractors, and putting together the quotations.

**Agreement of Church accounts**

John Robinson – Independent examiner of accounts, joined the meeting and introduced himself.

At the Council meeting on 2nd November, the Council agreed to adopt the church accounts, subject to independent examination. EB stated that he had resolved a balancing issue and thanked John for his help. John Robinson confirmed that he was content with the accounts, and saw no issues of concern.

The Council voted on whether they were content to adopt the accounts.

11 voted in support, 0 against. **Motion to adopt the accounts was carried.**

AP expressed his thanks to EB for his work in preparing the accounts and John Robinson for independently examining them. John Robinson left the meeting.

**Monies for Church lift in the Gambia**

AP raised an additional matter in relation to finance, relating to historic monies raised by the Church to install a stairlift in Bethel Methodist Church in the Gambia. AA stated that a normal lift had subsequently been donated, but the Gambian Church had paid to have the lift installed. AA asked for Church Council permission to release the monies to the Gambian church to pay for the installation. EB stated that previously transfer of the monies had not been possible because the HRMC needed a UK base to send the money to. He questioned whether this had been resolved. RH requested that, assuming it was agreed, details were sent to the Reporter. The Church Council voted whether they were happy to release the monies. This was **unanimously agreed, subject to finding the right channels to send the monies.**

**Future meeting dates**

The following meeting dates were given:

* Wed 21st April. Meeting for Church Council to discuss the De Havilland project
* Sunday 16th May, AGM - see if proceed on data / putting back (look at practicalities
* Wed 30th June: Church Council
* Monday 8th November: Church Council
* Tuesday 1st March 2022: Church Council
* 15th May 2022, AGM
* 29th June 2022: Church Council

The timing of the meetings were discussed. It was agreed that the April meeting (by Zoom) would be 7.45, then meetings from 30th June (it is hoped that these would be in person) revert to 8 o’clock.

AP thanked all for their input.

**Closing devotions** were held.