

Minutes of a Meeting of the Combined PCCs of St Matthew's Harwell with All Saints' Chilton held remotely via Zoom on Tuesday 3rd May 2022 at 7.30 pm

Present

(J) Denotes Joint PCC member. There were thus 11 voting members at this meeting - all resolutions refer to Joint PCC votes

Hazel Benton (J)	Steve Hale	Alex Reich
Peter Cox (Secretary)	Tony Hughes (J)	Jan Radford (J)
Debra Dewhurst	Rebecca Lewis	Pam Rolls (J)
Sid Gale	Allan Macarthur (J)	Judith Russell (J)
Naomi Gibson (J)	Liz Morris	Yvonne Sanderson (J)
Stuart Gibson (J)	Patrick Moseley	Eliza Wheaton (J, Chair)
Gordon Gill	John Pigott	Jane Woolley (J)

By Invitation:

Sarah Barrett, Children and Families Worker.
Jean Barton, Home Groups Coordinator.
Deborah Evans, Church Administrator.

1 Opening & Prayer

The Chair thanked everyone for attending this extra meeting.

Rev Pam Rolls read Ephesians chapter 1 verses 15 to 23, then led the meeting in prayer.

1.1 Agenda Items and Order

Eliza Wheaton said that the agenda is short but the items are important. The meeting is a follow up to the discussions on these items at the April Combined PCC meeting. There were no changes to the agenda order.

Eliza welcomed Steve Hale, Debra Dewhurst and Liz Morris who have just joined or re-joined the Chilton PCC at the APCM on Sunday.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Brendan Bailey, Hazel Connelly, Judy Gold and Phill Johnston (J).

Michelle Walker was absent.

Helen Brook had also been invited as leader of the World Mission Group but was absent.

3 Valley Park, Implications of New Rector and Mission and Vision

3.1 Valley Park

These Papers refer:

Paper A: Summary and Next Steps from CPCC Meeting 5th April 2022.

Paper B: Deanery Report on Greater Didcot – By Andy Lord, referred to by Gordon Gill at the April 2022 CPCC meeting.

Paper C: Greater Didcot Summary Proposal – By Wallingford Deanery Standing Committee, Proposal for informal group of Didcot Churches and guidelines for replacement of Vacancies depending on Parish Share.

Paper I: Thoughts from Patrick Moseley.

Paper J: Thoughts from Hazel Connelly.

Allan Macarthur introduced this item: Valley Park is a development of 4,500 houses, construction is due to start within the next year. It is mostly in Harwell Parish and so within the Benefice. It is important for the context of the Parish Profile and advertisement for the new Rector. We need to have a clear view about if the parish borders should stay as they are and so include Valley Park.

Allan prepared Paper A for this meeting to summarise the discussions so far and give further thoughts to reflect on during the weeks after the last meeting.

Since the meeting, a small group has started composing the Parish Profile, and the Deanery Report and Proposal have been circulated. Discussion of the Report and Proposal could be a distraction, so Allan proposed that they were not discussed in detail.

There are three things relevant to us in the Deanery Proposal:

- 1) The Deanery Response sets out the conditions for replacing ministers. It seems that, subject to confirmation, we will get a like for like replacement for Rev Mobey.
- 2) There is no consideration currently for changing the Parish borders, though this is not ruled out long-term.
- 3) The Deanery sees the need for parishes and churches to work together on Valley Park.

We do not need to think that we are doing this all ourselves and Valley Park will be part of our Benefice as things stand now.

Gordon Gill and Allan Macarthur answered questions:

A PCC member asked for a short explanation of the Deanery Report on Greater Didcot and Greater Didcot Summary Proposal.

Gordon Gill replied:

Structure:

The documents look at the structure and potential area covered. It is a complicated area. The options are to change the structure within Wallingford Deanery, change the structure of the local Deaneries or create a new Deanery. The proposal suggests that the parishes work as a team, informally to start with, and see how the ministry grows and develops its own shape. This shape can then be formalised and continued. One option is a team ministry: each church has a gift which could be its responsibility in the team– for our Benefice this could be Children and Families Work, as there is gifting for this in our church. The Deanery are trying to leave all options open to see how people and groups form and relate as the development is built and churches start working together.

Finance

The Area Dean has asked those churches in Didcot that are not able to support a full-time minister to address this by looking at options e. g. having a half-time minister or house for duty. But this may leave one minister trying to look after 30-40,000 parishioners when Valley Park is included. The Diocese could decide that the Deanery can replace clergy, which has implications over the next two years as some clergy are due to retire, or have someone on contract finance for the next year. If the parish can't afford the specified finance, the Diocese may say that you cannot replace a retiring full-time minister, and other options must be explored such as combining parishes to share a full-time minister, or a house for duty minister etc.

There is agreement that Harwell and Chilton can advertise for a like for like replacement of Rev Mobey; i.e. a full-time stipendiary minister. We are the only benefice in Greater Didcot in this situation.

What are the Damascus Parishes and Churn Benefice?

Gordon Gill said that the Churn Benefice is a group of 7 churches in the Wallingford Deanery, including Upton, Blewbury, Hagbourne, Aston Tirrold, Aston Upton and the Moretons.

The Damascus Parish is 6 churches in Abingdon Deanery, including: Drayton, Appleford, Milton, Sutton Courtenay and Steventon.

Valley Park has two phases, both are almost entirely in Harwell Parish, but the second phase to the north west is 800 houses in Milton Parish. There will also be 400 houses in the old Didcot A power Station site which is partly in Sutton Courtenay Parish and partly in Harwell Parish.

There is also some housing growth going north from Didcot towards Culham which will be in Aston and Cuddesdon Deanery, and if there is more, Abingdon Deanery. There could be a new Deanery there.

The situation is very complicated. The reports are trying to say to the Diocese, that we will all talk and work together to work out where the groups of parishes should go.

How do we know that Harwell and Chilton will get a Like for Like Replacement?

Allan Macarthur said that it can be inferred from the table of Parish Share requirements for different amounts of clergy working time, from full time, part time, and house for duty. We are paying the share requested for a full-time minister so we should be able to recruit another.

Gordon Gill said that the Diocese has agreed that we would get a full-time post for an incumbent common tenure, the same contract as Jonathan Mobey and Chris Stott. The post could have been suspended due to changes in the structure of the Deanery etc in which case we would get a Priest-in-Charge like Andy Lord at All Saints' Didcot. However, there is agreement that Harwell with Chilton needs a full-time incumbent post not a Priest-in Charge. The role may change, but the contract of employment will not.

It was stated that we need to be careful how this is communicated to the congregations and community. The Benefice will be changing considerably from now on: If the major responsibility of the new Rector is Valley Park, then they will be ministering to far more people than the previous Rectors.

Allan Macarthur said that Patrick Moseley and Hazel Connolly had made written submissions and asked for any further questions or comments now that there had been a chance to reflect since the last meeting:

If we say that Valley Park is in Harwell Parish, will we get a major role in deciding how this works given the encouragement to work together – will the other churches be happy with this? We need to understand the remit of the new Rector and manage the expectations of the candidates. Is it significant that the Curate is being supervised from a Didcot Church?

Allan Macarthur said that having an incumbent minister is significant, and comes with responsibilities which could not be overridden, so they would have a major say, though they would work with other parishes.

Gordon Gill agreed and said that an Incumbent has legal responsibility for the parish and what is happening in the Benefice. However, we should include in the Profile that there could be changes in future: part of Great Western Park is in Harwell Parish and there are options for regrouping of the parishes. For example: Harwell, Chilton, Valley Park and Great Western Park could be grouped together and the new Rector could be team Rector and the GWP minister could be a team vicar. Or our churches could be Resource Churches making a contribution across Didcot. There will not be a decision without consulting the PCCs and Rector due to the legal responsibility of the incumbent.

We need to mention in the profile that the role is changing and the Rector could be part of a team or a team leader. We should be careful who we are looking for and consult with the Patrons. However, we don't need to be concerned about ownership by the PCCs as once there is an incumbent, it becomes their legal responsibility as well.

Has our decision about Valley Park been side stepped by the decision that the Curate with responsibility for Valley Park is being supervised by All Saints' Didcot's Rector?

Gordon Gill said that the Deanery had no role in this decision either – Bishop Colin decided to place the Curate with All Saints' (as discussed at previous CPCC meetings).

Can the Curate be placed with our Benefice?

Gordon Gill said that at the moment Sasha is training under the supervision of Andy Lord. Once Sasha is ordained, and if she continues working in this area, she may be licenced to our Benefice.

Allan Macarthur summarised by saying that we could make it clear that Valley Park is in our benefice. Though the Deanery report may suggest other options in future, and we could agree to changes, it will become the responsibility of the new incumbent Rector and PCCs. He suggested that we consider the resolution from Paper A.

No Objections.

More comments

- We should be aware that with this remit, the Rector will have steadily less time to spend on the current parish as there is no funding yet for more clergy.
- We are hoping that if the ministry grows, we should get an increasing team to support the Rector.

- If the curate works in our benefice, it will help.
- There is a case for increased resources to be made available to cover the increased responsibilities.
- It was suggested that the resolution is reworded to say “with appropriate resources”.

Straw Poll on Nomination: Unanimous.

Resolution	We the PCC’s of Harwell and Chilton churches agree that the new Valley Park development should primarily remain our responsibility with appropriate resources and we will work with any new Rector and other parties to establish the most appropriate plans for this new large development.				
Proposed	Eliza Wheaton	Seconded	Judith Russell	Passed by the JPCC	Unanimous.

3.2 New Rector – Profile and 3.3 Mission and Vision

Allan Macarthur introduced this item, which is referred to in the second part of Paper A. Some of the qualities mentioned in the previous item, such as required skill set, apply here.

It is important that the people on the selection panel agree the required theological background and characteristics of the new Rector.

Through his knowledge of the Church membership and discussions over the years, Allan has found that there is a range of views and ecclesiastical backgrounds of the congregations and wider community, a term often used is “Open Evangelical”. As a result, he had composed the following statement in Paper A:

“We are a relatively low Church of England, with an Evangelical tradition, based on the biblical word of God, that is open and thoughtful about the ever-changing challenges of life and culture and how these are worked out in our faith. As such our Churches evolve over time as we grow in our faith and understanding but are firmly grounded in the core truths of our salvation and creed.”

Our statement of views is important because some candidates could hold different views to our churches, for example not agreeing with women in leadership, when we have many women leaders and clergy in our churches.

Discussion ensued:

- A PCC member asked if the Patrons have input to the statement? Allan replied that the statement has to align with the views of the Patrons, who will help write the profile, and highlight candidates whose views do not match.
- A Rector who is not supportive of female clergy is totally inappropriate for our churches.
- Rural parishes are challenging because they have a range of worship styles, so we need someone sympathetic to all styles rather than one particular style.
- There was strong agreement that whilst we do not need to specify every detail, we should be clear on agreement with women in leadership in the Profile.
- Allan said that this section was to guide the thinking behind the Profile, and we could check the Profile once drafted.
- A PCC member asked about candidates in a same-sex partnership. Gordon Gill said that we could not turn down candidates because of sexuality or background. We should focus on why we would appoint a candidate rather than why we might turn candidates down.
- The Profile is a long document with room to add the details, it will be challenging to include all this in the advert.
- We could get advice from the Patrons.
- We could ask people in the wider community for views about the new Rector.
- Valley Park will be diverse and cosmopolitan, so the new Rector must be able to engage with people and communities of all faiths and none, and cooperate as necessary on multi faith projects.
- There was strong agreement that the new Rector should be able to preach the Gospel in the context of the community they are living in.

- It was suggested that the Church Pastoral Aid Society would take the lead on this aspect. (CPAS is one of the patrons, the other is the Oxford Diocesan Board of Patronage.
- Gordon Gill agreed, and mentioned that the selection panel for Bishops, and for all senior posts, must include people of particular ethnicity and disability too. This will soon apply to parish selection panels; our representatives are to represent all worshippers.
- We need to reach out to the community, concentrating on what we agree on.
- There is more to consider and more consultation needed than we can complete at this meeting.

Allan Macarthur suggested that we should end the discussion at this point, and review the profile once the group has drafted it.

No Objections.

4 Parish Profile

Jane Woolley introduced these items:

Hazel Benton, Judith Russell and Jane Woolley have been working on the Parish Profile, and provided the papers referred to for each item.

Jane said that the Parish Profile is like a shop window for the benefice. It has to be completed before we can advertise the vacancy. It has to be agreed by the PCCs and the Patrons – CPAS and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Patronage. This makes composing the Profile complicated and a challenge. It would help if the decisions in the agenda are made at this meeting, or direction is given for the group to take forward. We may need to stop and gather opinions in another way if time becomes short. There are no resolutions in the papers so we may reach a “General Sense of Agreement” rather than take a vote.

4.1 Structure

Paper E refers: Draft structure of profile with section headings and a brief explanation of the content of each section: Summary, Broader Context, Harwell and Chilton as Communities, Our Churches, Leadership Structure, Resources, Strengths, Weaknesses and Future Direction and Who we are looking for.

Discussion ensued:

- Profiles can be very word heavy, it might be better to write shorter passages and include examples – we can be flexible and dynamic for example with the growth of the Children and Families Work and the response to Covid – online services were set up quickly, and, when permitted, new types of service were set up to comply with the restrictions which attracted many people, when we came out of the restrictions, we built on these initiatives rather than restarting in the pre-covid way. This shows that we have momentum and can change.
- Gordon Gill said that the Broader Context section was written by the Deanery for a previous post in Didcot. It included growth, population, church structure – we have the fastest pupil growth. So, this should be left to the Deanery which could include the Deanery Action Plan. We should focus on the vision and mission of the church.

Jane Wolley thanked the meeting for these points, she will get in touch with the Deanery.

General Sense of Agreement.

4.2 Timetable

Paper F refers: Timetable for composing and circulating drafts of the Parish Profile, advertising the vacancy, receiving applications, shortlisting and interviewing candidates, and making an offer.

Jane Woolley said that the timetable had been composed by setting an interview date and working back from there. She was looking to get a sense of what date we wanted to make the job offer and agree the steps suggested in the Paper that are needed to make this happen.

Jane highlighted steps 20 to 25, which cover advertising the vacancy, shortlisting, visits, interview and Job offer. The advert is set to go out in the Autumn, short-listing at the end of October, candidates visit and attend services, then interviews and job offer before Christmas. Jane asked if this was the timetable that we had in mind?

Discussion ensued:

Interview

- At another church the candidates preached a sermon.

- Gordon Gill said that another option is on interview day, there is a service led by the Bishop with the patrons, PCCs and the congregation. Each candidate gives a 5 minute sermon on a set theme, the other candidates are not present.
- In the previous vacancy, the candidates gave a simple sermon as part of the interview process.
- There are different ways to do this, not necessarily with a congregation.

Advertising

- Two weeks for advertising is short compared to other areas e.g. Education. Jane Woolley said that this was normal for business.
- Advertising for 3 issues of the Church Times is three weeks.

Overall Timing

- At the last meeting, we discussed advertising as soon as possible after the summer holidays, possibly the 2nd week of September, as people may use the summer break to think about their future. Interviews could then be held in early autumn when there is more time than Advent.
- In the last vacancy, all of the candidates wanted to have a detailed look around the whole Benefice. Each tour was on separate days, so the current timing may be tight for this.
- Gordon Gill said that the timetable as it stands means the Section 11 meeting will be in the required 6 month timescale from the vacancy occurring.
- Jane Woolley said that we could adjust the timetable to give more time for the later steps, though there are practicalities such as holidays. We could also cut down the number of drafts and rewrites, or reduce the number of people reviewing each draft. There was some agreement to this.
- This is the timetable we need to get someone in place before Easter next year, allowing for the new Rector to give notice. If we move later than this, the start date for the new Rector will slip considerably.
- The usual length of notice for Clergy is three months, but this could slip further, for example for schooling and term dates.
- Remembrance Sunday is 13 November so this timetable would fit.
- What happens to the timescale if we need to re-advertise? It was stated that we are hoping that we will be successful in the first round as the post should be popular.
- The timing seems quite tight and compressed, if the interregnum is already one year, could we add another few months to give time to do the tasks well rather than rush them and get things wrong?
- Whilst we want to do the tasks well and not pressure people, a long interregnum may look indecisive to the candidates. So the number of reviews and reviewers should be kept as low as possible and we can complete the Profile in a timely manner.
- There was some agreement that the PCCs do not need to see every draft of the Profile.
- The Patrons could review the timetable at the meeting on 11th May.
- The author of the last Profile said that it took 4 and a half months from start to finish, including reviews and chasing contributors.
- The Patrons will also want to review the profile and suggest changes, they would decide how long they need to do this.
- We should be flexible and leave the timetable to the Profile group.

Jane Woolley suggested that she takes the timetable back to the group for further discussion.

There was a general sense of agreement to this.

4.3 Which PCC Members Will Review Draft One

Paper F refers (see previous item)

Jane Woolley asked if this should be the whole PCC or a sub-group.

The Chair suggested that the first draft is reviewed by a sub group of the PCC, too many people reviewing would slow progress down.

No Objections.

Jane Woolley asked who should be in the sub group – this could be the interview panel “Parish Representatives”. There was some agreement that the group should be the Parish Representatives.

Allan Macarthur and Jane Woolley said that the Parish Representatives are formally agreed at the Section 11 meeting, but could be agreed now informally. The decision rests with the individual PCCs.

It was stated that the four churchwardens were the Parish Representatives at the last vacancy. Allan Macarthur said that this was what the PCCs had wanted and voted on, but other people could be selected.

Jane Woolley proposed that the PCC Secretaries add the decision on Parish Representatives to the agendas for the individual PCC meetings on 7th June.

No Objections.

Jane added that this could be discussed further at the Patrons meeting on 11th May.

4.4 Visual Design

Paper G refers: Three options for design, with examples

- 1) Very professional - likely to need a professional designer who may charge.
- 2) Fairly professional - possibly produced using Power Point which could be done in-house.
- 3) Traditional - possibly produced using Word – similar to our previous one, this could also be done in-house.

Jane Woolley said that the Profile group would like to know the CPCC's preference. The group recommended option 2, unless anyone knew of someone who could compile a profile professionally free of charge.

Debra Dewhurst said that we should make the Profile as attractive as possible. She has the background and experience to produce a profile like option 1.

There was general agreement for Debra to take this forward.

Discussion ensued:

- Printing costs are less likely to be significant as the profile will be on the Diocesan and CPAS websites.
- We should be careful not to put style over substance.
- Photographs of the villages should be included. Debra said that she can provide these and there were various suggestions of local photographers.
- Photographs of key activities should be included. The Church Administrator said that Jonathan had taken some photographs, which should be stored in the Church Office. The walking group has photographs and there are some in the annual reports.
- It would be good to include photographs of the activities during the Covid restrictions.
- People could take more photographs over the coming months, getting permission as required.
- Videos could also be included – one Parish Profile has links to videos. It was suggested that a former Children and Families worker had taken some videos which could still be available.
- Candidates can also look at our website.

Jane Woolley said that the group will consider these suggestions.

4.5 Strengths and Weaknesses

Paper H refers: A table of strengths and weaknesses.

Jane Woolley said that the strengths need to be distinctive and not just activities that any church would do. Discussion ensued:

Headings and General Comments

- Jane Woolley said that the headings were from Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The Opportunities and Threats will be detailed elsewhere in the Profile.
- Alternative headings were discussed including: Challenges, Areas for Concern, Areas for Improvement, Things we do well and Things we could do better.
- It is better to be honest about our problems, than pretend they don't exist, or we appear not recognise them.
- The named author of the paper said that it had been redrafted before circulation and she was not happy with the new wording, which could provoke discussion.
- Several PCC members suggested finessing the wording in order to be honest, but avoid upsetting people.
- We could be positive - Strengths could be what we are good at, that work well and are proven, Weaknesses could be what doesn't work or we would like to do better, Opportunities could be mission etc that we don't do but would like to, and Threats could be what would bring things down, e. g. problems with buildings or finances etc.

Ageing Congregation

- A Harwell PCC member disputed that the Harwell church congregation was ageing, and said that there was growth in attendance by younger age groups and stability in attendance by older age groups.
- A Chilton PCC member said that aging congregations were a common problem across the Country, we are doing our best to balance it.
- We are doing comparatively well - in some parishes no one under 70 attends church.

Welcome to Young People

- Several Chilton PCC members said that they do welcome younger people and children in church and missed their presence now that most of the child-focussed services are in St. Matthew's.
- A Children and Families worker said that there are monthly children's services in Chilton Village Hall and she encouraged the All Saints' congregation to join them more often.
- There is no Children's Corner in All Saints' and it would not be easy to reorder the layout, heating, flooring and furniture to the flexible arrangement now in St. Matthews', which is more suited to children's services and the number of people that attend them.
- The current service pattern was worked on and agreed by the PCCs, though it was not everyone's preference, and we should work together going forward.
- The Chair said that whilst this is important, it is not our main focus at this meeting.

Other Strengths and Weaknesses

- We have a lot of strengths and should not only focus on problems.
- Children and Families work is a strength and Sarah and Brendan's work is good and appreciated.
- Harwell with Chilton is a founder-member of the Didcot Youthwork Trust which is reaching a lot of young people - 60 young people attended a service recently.
- We are an outward looking Benefice, such as our work with the Didcot foodbank, CAP and the Youthwork trust, so the new Rector must be outward looking.
- The Benefice runs a lot of activities not expected of village churches such as Alpha and Christianity Explored, Living in Love and Faith, Holiday Club and the Children's and Families work.
- The Prayer Group is shrinking but a lot of prayer takes place at home groups.
- People can be unhappy with and object to changes for valid reasons.
- As there are two PCCs with many members, we have a wide range of views, which can make decision making thorough but slow. Single churches with one small PCC, could find it easier to get consensus and make quicker decisions. This is both a strength and weakness, but it would be good to be spontaneous sometimes.

Jane Woolley said that this had been a really useful discussion with much to consider. She thanked everyone for their input and different perspectives.

5 Any Other Business

C 5.1 New Safeguarding Officer

Allan Macarthur reported that a new Safeguarding Officer will be appointed.

The Chair closed the meeting with the Grace at 21:55 pm.

Dates of next meetings:

Meeting with Patrons: 11th May 2022 St Matthew's Harwell 7:30pm

APCM St. Matthew's: 8th May 2022

Individual PCCs: 7th June 2022, St Matthew's Harwell

Combined PCC: 5th July 2022 online

CHAIR

SECRETARY

DATE

DATE