

Minutes of the Christ Church Council Meeting 22nd July 2014

Present: Judith Anderson, Judith Bishop, Margaret Burrows, Morny Davison, Mark Elliott, Matthew Jones, David Rawlings, Sharon Rawlings, Andrew Sillett, Alex Soboslay, Angela Soboslay, Canon Angela Townshend (chair), Brenda Wall (secretary), Malcolm Wall

1. Apologies were received from Bob Siderfin and Sarah Kerr.

2. Welcome

Matthew, Sharon and Judith A were welcomed as new members. Alex proposed a vote of thanks to retiring members Rebecca Nicholson and Martin Palmer, which was passed by acclamation.

3. Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting (29 April 2014), with one clarification and one grammatical change, were approved (proposed Morny, seconded David, passed unanimously). There were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

4. Trustees' report

(1) Trustees had met on 10th July and given their approval to the bells project.

(2) Trustees also established a new process for handling building projects, and will be seeking individuals to lead each project, at the planning stage and then through the execution stage (not necessarily the same person), with standard reporting procedures drawn up by David Bishop.

(3) Trustees also discussed the workings of the Buildings Working Group. Mark suggested that it had fulfilled its brief and did not need to continue in its present form. Since the WG is a subcommittee of Council, this should be discussed by Council. See below.

(4) Trustees, as the legally responsible body, are in the process of considering the draft safeguarding policy. This will be circulated when decided. The draft to be e-mailed to new members for information.

(5) The Planning Application for removal of the superfluous garden wall at the back of church, in order to create a turning head to make parking easier, is with Bath Council, and we were encouraged to write letters of support. Alex and Malcolm to ascertain where these need to be sent.

5. Buildings

(1) Projects in progress

a. Entrance. Bath Council has objected to the proposed access ramp and new steps at the main west doors, saying that they affect the historic character of the building. The Trustees propose to respond defending the proposals, which are primarily for the purpose of better disabled access.

b. Heating. We have received the DAC Certificate of Advice in favour of the proposed boiler replacement. A public notice is being displayed for 28 days (up to mid-August), after which the faculty petition will be submitted. All going well, the work should be done in September.

Council formally approved the Statement of Needs relating to this work (proposed Andrew, seconded Mark, passed unanimously).

c. Bob has stepped down as chair of the Buildings Working Group because of family matters. Matthew proposed a vote of thanks to Bob for all his work, and Andrew seconded it. Passed by acclamation. Bob will be written to and thanked in church.

(2) Handling of projects

a. Building project leaders will be appointed by Trustees, but priorities need to come from the congregation. How does Council want to prioritise which projects are done?

In the course of discussion, Morny wondered if the Buildings Working Group had a role any longer. David suggested that Council should have a member who will be a buildings specialist. Andrew proposed that we have a regular Building item on the agenda, so we don't lose sight of projects and Council has a say on the projects.

No formal decision was taken about the Working Group or other structures but it was agreed that final specs and costings for projects will be brought back to Council and Trustees.

b. Malcolm asked if there is a timeline set for the completion of the work on the lobby and the porch.

(3) The bells

Ian Hay Davison reported that so far £120,000 has been raised. A full ring of eight bells will cost £132,000, and he is optimistic that there is more money to come in. There could even be enough to help with the cost of the porch works.

The builders start work this week on blocking up the louvres, adding the new sound-proof floor and preparing the ringing chamber for the new bell frame. The work should take about six weeks. The old ventilation flue will be taken out and there will be new electrics.

There are now four sponsored bells, each with a dedication. This leaves one undedicated bell. Ian proposed that the church decide on the dedication for this. As well as dedications cast into the bells themselves, we will also need a plaque or board recording the dedications, perhaps in the porch. Andrew suggested considering this as part of the faculty application for the porch works.

Ian has spoken to the DAC about increasing the number of bells to eight, and this should not require a new faculty. The DAC also said the dedications were a matter for the church to approve.

Ian said a flat floor for the ringing chamber would be best for ringing and training new ringers (with a trap door through which to lower bells). It was agreed that this needs to be considered in the context of the design of the porch and will form part of that faculty application.

Ian explained that we will next need to appoint a tower captain, a ringing master and a steeple keeper (who does not need to be a ringer). He undertook to write job descriptions for the next meeting. He said the ringers will make a contribution to the cost of maintaining the bells.

St Andrew's Junior School is interested in sending children to learn how to ring the bells. Margaret hoped that someone will be found to teach children how to ring.

There was a vote of thanks to Ian (proposed by Andrew, seconded by David). Thanks were also voiced to David Kelly and all the volunteers who helped to lower the bells.

Discussion followed about the financial position. At the moment there is a shortfall of £12,000, and a contingency of £10,000. VAT and Gift Aid are to be reclaimed by David Bishop as Treasurer. Given Ian's confidence about the fundraising, it was formally agreed that we recommend to Trustees that there should be a full ring of eight bells (proposed David, seconded Morny, passed without dissent).

Canon Angela reminded us that these bells will make sure that people know that Christ Church is open for business, and we should invite everybody to a social function when they are up. Maybe the new Bishop of Bath and Wells can dedicate them when he is here for our Patronal Festival.

6. Outside events in church

Following controversy about Toppings holding cookery demonstrations in the church, Canon Angela asked Council what types of events we thought were appropriate in church. She read the parable of the talents, with the

question of how we use the building and for whom.

David said he was happy with book signings, concerts and lectures, but not with cookery demonstrations. Malcolm made the point that we have a beautiful church in which we can build communal spirit. We should be a positive contributor and we have a responsibility to the local area. Morny quoted former Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie to the effect that the Church of England was the only club founded for the benefit of people who are not members. Andrew made the point that some people are nervous about outreach but we must be outward looking.

Mark noted that we regularly serve food from the kitchen at the back of the church and asked what the problem is about the cookery demo. Is it proximity to the altar? Some members said it would have been better if the altar had been moved back and better protective measures taken, but others said cookery in the body of the church was not acceptable.

Matthew said the problem is getting people through the doors, so the more events the better. Book signings have had a lot of good feedback.

Alex said there were practical issues – the oil stain on the platform, caused by a spill during one cookery event, is still a problem – but the main point was that the building is not just a public resource to be used as we like: he quoted the rules of Canon Law, which mandate that a consecrated building must not be “profaned by any meeting [or other activities] for temporal objects inconsistent with the sanctity of the place”.

Brenda proposed a checklist of what may or may not be acceptable, but Alex argued that we could not anticipate everything that might come up and advocated a more formal and robust procedure for handling proposed events, so as to prevent such controversies. He suggested that we also need formal agreements with outside people who are using the building, covering who is responsible for any damage or accidents. Our insurers also require this and formal risk assessments.

Andrew had prepared and circulated a paper about legal responsibility for the building, which concluded that the Trustees are the responsible body. Judith B gave the dates for the rest of the year for book signings and said that there are no more cookery demonstrations planned.

The question was raised what formal agreements does St Swithin’s have for signings etc. covering health and safety, liability and such questions. Alex to investigate for the next meeting.

7. Any other business

(1) Contacts database. Alex asked Council members to add their personal

contact information to a spreadsheet and consent to this being circulated among Council members.

(2) Pastoral care. Margaret made the point that Christ Church has always been good at visiting sick people, but that recently somebody had slipped through the net.

(3) Appointments. Seeking clarification of a point in the minutes of the previous meeting, Judith A asked whether an appointments procedure had been put in place. It was agreed that it had been: Council will be kept informed.

(4) Chalice assistants. Canon Angela said that chalice assistants need a renewal of licence from the bishop. The meeting approved the list by acclamation (proposed David, seconded Margaret).

(5) Rotas. There was some discussion whether people on the readings, sidesperson and chalice rotas could get a little more notice of when they're on duty. Could Sarah Cade get the rotas out a little earlier?

8. Dates for future meetings

The next meeting was set for Tuesday 2nd September at 19.40. Meetings for the rest of this year will be Tuesday 14th October and 25th November.

The Meeting closed with prayer.