



Diocese of Nottingham: The Good Shepherd Parish Finance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 13th June 2024

In attendance: Francesca Lynch, Philip Martin (Acting Chair) and Oliver Wastell.

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with a prayer led by Philip.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from John Doherty, Martin Foulds, Oliver Kuras, David Staiano and Canon Philipp Ziomek. In Canon Philipp's absence, it was agreed that Philip would act as the Chairperson for this meeting of the Committee.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 7th March 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and will now be posted on the parish notice board and website. **ACTION 11/24: Philip** to action accordingly.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

a) *Review of parish staff salaries-* It was reported that the diocese, in its capacity as the formal employer of the parish's paid staff, had recently advised that they were reviewing any pay increase requests against the relevant job descriptions and were using job evaluation tools to apply the appropriate banding for the role in order to ensure equity across the diocese. This approach had been applied to the parish's office manager post and on that basis the post had been evaluated at band 5, which currently has an hourly rate of £15.27. The diocese had also advised that pay increases for employees who are outside the real living wage are applied from 1st April each year. This overrides the recommendation of the Committee at its meeting on 7th March 2024 when a pay increase for the office manager post was discussed and agreed retrospectively to 1st December 2023.

Francesca advised that interviews for the vacant post of parish administrative assistant were being held on 21st June.

b) *New parish website-* Francesca reported that the parish pastoral team had recently discussed reactivating the arrangements with Coda Education to develop the parish's new website which had stalled following Phil Bray's resignation from the Committee. As a first step, Julie Rawding had been commissioned to contact Coda Education on behalf of the pastoral team to develop the new links and help bring the work on the development of the new website to a conclusion.

c) **Deanery youth worker post-** In Canon Philipp's absence it was not possible to update the committee on progress with regard to this initiative. **ACTION 12/24: Canon Philipp** to advise further at the Committee's next meeting.

d) **Parish finances update-** Francesca advised that contact had been made with Kelly Hart, the consultant the parish has engaged to investigate sources of grant aid towards the cost of repairing the defective concrete affecting the mullions and other parts of the church building, given there had been no recent feedback in this regard. Kelly subsequently asked for updated information on the likely building costs and start date for the project. It was understood that Canon Philipp had responded and that Julie Rawding had also followed up with Kelly.

5. Parish Annual Return 2023/24

Francesca took the Committee through the draft Annual Return produced through OPAS (the diocese's Online Parish Accountancy System) and tabled updated income and expenditure pages.

The Committee sought clarification from Francesca on a number of the income and expenditure lines. Some of these queries will be followed up by Francesca before the draft is finalised.

It was recognised however that comparisons with the parish's Return for 2022/23 were difficult as the parish had migrated to OPAS from November 2022, part way through the financial year. It had consequently been necessary for the parish's financial data for the period April- October 2022 inclusive to be input on OPAS by the diocese by means of journal transfers. This meant that the detailed unpinning transactions prior to November 2022 were not easily accessible on OPAS for comparative purposes.

It was also noted that other additional, relatively minor work on the draft was still required and there may be some further marginal changes in due course. John Doherty is to examine the draft on 20th June and thereafter the final agreed version will need to be signed off by Canon Philipp and Philip (acting as the committee Chair) prior to its submission to the diocese.

ACTION 13/24: (1) Francesca to follow up the relevant queries and finalise the draft prior to John Doherty examining and signing it off; thereafter: **(2) Canon Philipp and Philip** to sign off the Return prior to its submission to the diocese; **(3) Philip** subsequently to draft the usual summary for parishioners.

6. Parish Finances-update

Francesca provided an update on the parish's current finances:

- there is a credit balance of £19,836.69 in the parish's current bank account as at today's date.
- the parish's separate set-off account (held with the diocese) is currently in credit to the sum of £263,614.83. This account is being built up by regular transfers from the parish's current account to help with the cost of repairing the defective concrete affecting the mullions and other parts of the church building and to limit the amount of money we subsequently have to borrow.

- there had not been any major items of expenditure since the Committee's last meeting.

7. Analysis of income 2023/24

Philip took the Committee through his final report for 2023/24 relating to the parish's "measurable" income sources (weekly offertory donations, bank standing orders, parish debt collections, Gift Aid, the Dona contactless donations and donations made through the on-line "Donate" facility).

The parish's total income from these sources in 2023/24 showed an increase of 1% on 2022/23 levels. However, when inflation is factored in there was a real terms reduction of 2.2% over the year.

It was reported that there had been a year on year increase of 16% in Mass attendance. The average week-end Mass attendance has further increased since 1st April 2024 to an average of 712 attendees, representing a 2.4% increase so far on 2023/24 attendance levels.

Philip explained that the parish finances supplement to the parish newsletter had been produced, but owing to a printing error had been published in two parts – one on 5th May 2024 and the other on 12th May. Unfortunately, there had been no response from parishioners to either of the supplements which had sought to encourage parishioners to review their current levels of giving and also persuade more parishioners to join the parish planned giving and Gift Aid arrangements.

It was agreed therefore that an alternative approach may be necessary. With that in mind, it was suggested that a finance committee led appeal from the pulpit should be considered. However, it was felt that this should be delayed until March 2025 at the earliest as parishioners were currently being contacted by the parish seeking pledges to the diocese's *Enabling Our Mission Campaign* which the parish, inter alia, is piloting. Francesca mentioned in this regard that she had been asked by the campaign director, Matt Bloomer, to contact around 60 parishioners to elicit their response to the campaign appeal. There were concerns that this approach may serve to alienate some of our parishioners who were already generously supporting the parish in different ways.

It was agreed that consideration of a parish finance related pulpit appeal should be considered further by the Committee at its meeting in December 2024 with a view to agreeing the approach to be adopted in March 2025.

ACTION 14/24: (1) Philip to continue to bring quarterly income reports to the Committee; (2) Philip to include the proposed pulpit appeal on the agenda for the Committee's meeting in December 2024.

8. Diocesan Quota 2024/25

The letter, dated April 2024, from David Lawes, Chief Operating Officer for the diocese, advising the parish's diocesan quota payment for 2024/25, was noted. The parish's

quota, based on assessable income (currently offertory collections, Gift Aid and any rents) received in 2022/23, has been assessed as £32,119.50 for 2024/25. This , represents a 3% increase on the quota for 2023/24.

At Canon Philipp's request, consideration was also given to the proposal, floated at deanery level by the diocese, that in future years the definition of assessable income on which the quota is based, be amended to encompass all parish income other than such things as legacies and grants. It was noted that such an approach would have increased the parish's quota payment for 2024/25 to £48,146- a £16,026 (50%) overall increase. Philip advised that over the last five years such an approach would have led to the parish paying a total of £68,338 extra to the diocese.

The Committee expressed its concern that any increase in the definition of assessable income, as proposed by the diocese, would have a significant deleterious effect on the parish's income and would, for example, negatively impact on our ability to fund the repairs needed to the defective concrete affecting the mullions and other parts of the church building. The Committee were also concerned that this proposal seeks to fund the diocesan Curia and takes no account of the additional money our parishioners are being asked to contribute to the diocese's *Enabling Our Mission Campaign*, for which one of the spending priorities is also focussed on extending the scope of the Curia's activities.

The Committee were therefore unanimously of the view that it could not in principle support any increase in the definition of assessable income used in the quota calculations.

ACTION 15/24: Philip to convey the Committee's comments to Canon Philipp.

9. Parish Tea Dance- statement of accounts 2023/24

The statement of accounts for 2023/24 for the parish Tea Dance arrangements was received by the Committee and duly noted.

It was agreed that a similar statement of accounts for 2023/24 should be requested from the parish Friendship Group and be brought to the Committee for consideration.

ACTION 16/24: Philip to follow up accordingly.

10. Parish uniformed groups' use of the parish centre facilities

Consideration was given to the detailed report on the future charging arrangements for the use of the parish centre facilities by the Girls' uniformed groups, reflecting the fact that they no longer have a specific religious affiliation with the parish.

It was felt that the proposed charges from September 2024, amounting to £21 per hour for the booking before 7pm and £29.10 per hour for the booking after 7pm (both of which are to be discounted by 20% as the groups have charitable status) were not unreasonable in that the groups were not being treated any differently from other hirers who do not have any affiliation to the parish. It was felt the parish should not in normal circumstances make exceptions to its charging policy as this is difficult to defend if we were to be challenged by other external groups who are already paying the charges.

It was appreciated that the charge may necessitate the Girls' uniformed groups increasing their fees to the parents of the children concerned, but it was felt the groups had benefitted from the free use of the centre for a considerable time and it was matter for them as to whether they feel able to subsidise their clientele, particularly those who may be financially disadvantaged.

It was however recognised that Canon Philipp, as parish priest, will make the final decision on the request from the groups that a lower charge be applied to their use of the centre facilities.

Francesca advised that Canon Philipp had been emailed by the groups requesting a meeting to discuss the issue but she wasn't sure whether a response had yet been made. It was agreed that Francesca and/or Philip would support Canon Philipp at any such meeting if he felt it helpful.

It was also agreed that to help in the further consideration of this issue we should endeavour to ascertain:

- a) The number of children currently attending each of the groups' sessions at the centre each week
- b) What fees the groups currently charge for children attending their sessions
- c) What fees other similar groups may be charging
- d) What charges are made for other similar groups' use of community based facilities.

ACTION 17/24: (1) Philip to advise Canon Philipp of the Committee's considerations; (2) Francesca to see what information she is able to gather on (a)-(d) above; (3) Oliver to consult a friend to see what charges they pay for their children's involvement in local scout group related activities.

11. Any Other Business

- a) ***Review of hall hire charges-*** it was agreed that the charges for hiring the parish centre facilities should be reviewed in due course in the light of inflation and that any changes that may subsequently be agreed should be implemented from 1st April 2025.

ACTION 18/24: Philip to arrange for a report to be brought to the Committee's meeting in December 2024.

12. Date of the next meeting

As neither Francesca nor Oliver will be available, it was agreed that the Committee's next meeting, originally scheduled for 6.30-8.00pm on 19th September 2024, should be rearranged for Thursday, 26th September. Francesca confirmed that the Gilbert Room was available on that date. **ACTION 19/24:** (1) All to note in their diaries; (2) Francesca to book the Gilbert room for the meeting.