

Minutes of the Parish AGM - 16th July 2017

1) Opening Prayer and Welcome - Fr. Quentin

Quentin opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Becket Centre and spoke of the importance of the Parish moving forward in challenging times. We are all aware that there are fewer Priests and that the Laity will need to do more to contribute to the running of our Parish.

2) Minutes of the last AGM to be approved.

The minutes of the 2016 AGM were approved.

3) Chairman's Annual Report - Kit Tranmer

St. Thomas's must encourage the Laity to take on more of the tasks currently undertaken by our Priests. Our Priests should not be encumbered by the day to day running of our Parish, but should be able to focus on pastoral matters and other matters which the Laity cannot do.

All sub-committees within the Parish Council were listed; but, in reality, we must understand that things do not change overnight. The Parish Council has much work still to do.

Key areas we need to focus on include: provision for the youth, social events and outreach programmes.

There needs to be an ever-changing relationship between the Priests and the Laity to ensure that all the needs of our Parish are met.

The real work of the Parish is not carried out by the Parish Council, but is undertaken by the many volunteers our Parish has.

Kit Tranmer, our Chairman, announced his resignation as Chair of the Parish Council.

4) Explanation of and motion to approve the New Constitution - Isabel Parker

The New Constitution must be approved at the AGM. Copies of this have been made available in the Parish office, on the Parish Website and pinned to the notice board outside church.

The New Constitution sets out the processes and procedures of the Parish: 1) it provides us with a discipline, our rules. 2) it is a document for parishioners, to ensure that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing.

There have been some minor, cosmetic changes.

Other changes are: 1) the length of time a member of the Parish Council can serve. This has been increased from 6 to 9 years. 2) To ensure that communication to the Parish is effective - hard copies to be made available, as well as social media, where appropriate. 3) Clarifying the procedure for electing new members of the Parish Council.

There was a lengthy discussion about when the AGM should be held each year, with some asking if we could be more flexible about when it was held.

If there is an urgent matter to be discussed an EGM will be called in the interim.

Kit agreed the timing of the AGM in the new constitution needed to be clear but, in order to avoid a long discussion, asked if this could be left to the PPC to finalise in the near future.

This was agreed and there was a vote, by a show of hands, approving the New Constitution. There were none against.

5) Parish Finance Presentation - Report from the Finance Committee - Brian Martin

Brian explained that the Finance Committee meet 4 times a year, with Paul Turpin acting as liaison between the Parish Council and the Finance Committee.

Brian went on to explain that Gift Aid is very important to our Parish. This is money we are able to claim back from HMRC and equates to an income of £35,000.

Income from the offertory collections is down 1.4% and this is our main source of income.

We currently have no investments.

Social events income is down and there is currently a question mark over our Parish Summer Fete. We urgently need volunteers to organise this annual event.

Funds raised from the Repository and the Magazine are down.

Our expenditure is up 11%. This is largely our administration costs (the office staff wages etc)

24% of our expenditure is money spent on the fabric of the church (heating, lighting, car park, boiler etc)

Brian explained that £40,000 has been earmarked for building work and repairs.

Our total reserves are £370,000.

Mass attendance has fallen from 1400 to 1000.

Brian was asked if we should start making appeals to the Parish to contribute more at the Offertory collections. Brian is keen to promote Gift Aid.

If our reserves dwindle significantly, the Finance Committee will report this to the Parish Priest. Brian highlighted the fact that it is very expensive to run our church. Costs are high, especially when it comes to repairs and maintenance.

6) Elections - Kit Tranmer/Quentin

We have had no candidates for the Parish Council as there has been no response from the Parish. This does not cause us a problem this year as we have enough members to run the Parish Council. Next year, we will need more people to come forward.

7) a) Fees for Guides using the Becket Centre

Girl Guiding Leader Gill Sharkey told the meeting that the Guides have been using the Becket Centre for 75 years and have not had to pay rent to do so. The Becket Centre Committee have suggested that all non-parish groups using the Becket Centre should pay £50 per year. Gill feels that the Guiding Groups cannot afford to pay this amount, this is especially true for the Rainbows who are struggling to recruit new leaders. Gill estimates that the Guiding Groups raise approximately £1000 for our Parish from the various events they run stalls at.

Bernard is a member of the Becket Centre Committee and stepped up to address Gill's concerns.

Bernard explained that the Becket Centre should be paid for by the people who use it, if they can afford to pay. This pays for the upkeep of the Centre for everyone.

Parish Groups will not be expected to pay for the Becket Centre but groups who charge people to come into the Centre should pay a fee for using it. This will remind those groups who use the Becket Centre that it is a resource to be looked after and valued.

Bernard suggested that Gill contact the Parish Council and ask if they can subsidise the Guiding Groups.

Gill and Bernard agreed to discuss the matter further, offline.

7) b) Other questions

- Could we increase the number of candle holders at each of the statues where there are candles?
- Kit Tranmer - we are not looking to increase the number of candle holders, but we are looking at the safety issue surrounding candles in our church. One idea is that we have electric candles instead to improve safety for all.
- Can we have a fire drill and evacuation practise?
- Kit Tranmer - This issue is very much on the minds of the Parish Council and has been discussed. We are aware of the need for such an evacuation/drill to take place. There are 2 main issues for the Parish Council going forward into next year. These are: 1) Health and safety and 2) our car park. Some people are in favour of a "free for all" system, others would like stricter rules put in place to determine who can and cannot use the car park.

8) Vote of thanks to all leaving the Committee and to Groups in the Parish

- Quentin thanked all parishioners who attended the AGM and also Parish Council members who are standing down. Special thanks went to Kit Tranmer as he steps down as Chair of the Parish Council.