

St Mary Magdalen Ipswich - Finance Committee Minutes

Meeting held in the Guildroom on Thursday 14th October 2021

1. Present

Fr. Mathew, Linis Dolby, Declan Moore, Andrew Ford & Chris Croker plus Michael Long, Collett Long, Jim Poll & Heather Poll (for item 3)

2. Apologies for absence

None required

3. Presentation from Sandra Portas - Diocesan Fundraising & Stewardship Co-ordinator

Sandra was welcomed to the meeting and gave a presentation on the Diocesan programme which is being rolled out for all parishes to participate in and is entitled "Faithful Stewards of God's Gifts - Time, Talents & Treasure". All materials are provided by Sandra and can be adapted as necessary to suit each parish's particular circumstances. The aim of the programme is to encourage more parishioners to volunteer for the various activities necessary to support the parish and to examine whether they can provide more in the way of a financial contribution.

The programme is intended to be presented at all masses over 3 consecutive weekends and is comprised of:

Wk1 The parish priest introducing the programme and the concept of stewardship

Wk2 A talk by a member of the Finance Committee to explain parish finances, gift aid, standing orders etc.

Wk3 Parish priest introducing pledge forms and parishioners renewing/refreshing their volunteering & financial commitment to the parish.

Volunteers will be required at each stage to answer questions and hand out literature both during and after mass as appropriate.

It was left for the parish to decide when best to run the programme.

4. Minutes of previous finance committee meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2021 were approved, matters arising were as follows:

Finance - A donation envelope to be included with wedding and baptism literature (parish priest)

Offertory - A reminder to be published in the newsletter about the Christmas Offering in the weeks leading up to Christmas

- It was agreed that counting should continue to be carried out on a monthly basis by Declan & Celia
- We are now receiving contributions from other religious organisations using the church and premises

Hall Letting - Linis expressed concern about the safety risk of storing chairs and getting them out from underneath the stage and it was agreed to consider either storing them underneath the stairs or on the stage itself once the old wooden chairs currently stored on the stage have been sold.

- Still need to investigate whether the house cleaner or the school cleaner would be interested in supplementing the hall cleaning resources (parish priest)

5. Financial Position

A summary of the financial position was circulated which showed the parish making an operating surplus of £3k to the end of September and a forecast breakeven position for the year.

The offertory has risen by an average of £72 per week to the end of September compared with the annual average for 2020. More parishioners are now paying by standing order/ direct credit to our bank account which has greatly assisted our regular income.

As restrictions are relaxed and parishioners return to mass in person it is hoped that we will also see an increase in the cash element of the offertory.

Income from hall lettings is expected to exceed last year's by £2k as coronavirus restrictions are relaxed and the hall is fully reopened.

Since the last meeting a grant of £3,000 has been received from the LD Rope Third Charitable Settlement and has been put towards ongoing running costs.

Expenditure on repairs and maintenance is anticipated to increase by £2k over last year as work to rewire the church and carry out other electrical works in the house and hall are completed to enable compliance with standards. The flat roof to the guild room kitchenette/toilet block has also been replaced following the discovery of wet rot in the supporting timbers when the new parish room was being constructed.

Cash balances for general use totalled £26.2k at the end of September but are forecast to reduce to nearer £20k by the end of the year.

6. Parish Room Project

The room is currently being fitted out with furniture and equipment and will be ready for use by the end of October.

Works that remain to be completed include (a) the installation of railings & balustrade to the ramps and raised area in the front of the church (b) decorative strip to be laid on the drive in front of the wall (c) fence panel to be installed between the church and the parish room (d) beech hedging to be planted in the area

between the church and the drive entrance (e) parish room front door to be replaced with a wheelchair accessible version (f) double gates on Highfield approach to be reinstated with the possible addition of a pedestrian gate.

It was agreed that an appropriate name for the new room would be the Garden Room and this is how it will be referred to in the future.

7. Hall Strategy

With completion of the Garden Room there will be fewer occasions when the church hall will be needed for parish purposes and it was agreed that we need a strategy on how to best to operate/manage it going forwards.

In a normal year rental income would be circa £8k per annum and there is potential to increase this but the hall has suffered from lack of investment over the years and it is estimated that to bring it up to modern standards would cost in the region of £75k including (a) replacement of roofing felt and installing roof insulation (b) installing double glazed windows (c) installing a better heating system (d) refitting the kitchen (e) reconfiguring the toilet block including provision of accessible facilities.

As the hall is available for community use there is a strong possibility that we may be able to access grant funding for some of the work and Sandra Portas volunteered to assist with this.

We do however need an agreed strategy before we set up a project to move this forward.

8. Energy

The current 3 year fixed price contracts for supply of gas and electricity expired in the second quarter of the year and new 3 year fixed price contracts have been agreed with Opus Energy our current supplier after a competitive review.

Costs are expected to increase by £400-£500 per annum over the previous contracts due to a combination of rises in wholesale energy costs and the fact that the previous contracts were negotiated with nil standing charges for gas supply.

9. Property Matters

(a) Hall

Work Carried Out Since the Last Meeting

- Electrical consumer unit replaced
- Other remedial electrical works as identified in the inspection completed
- Old school chairs removed from loft and placed on stage in readiness for sale

Future Work Required

- Wire fencing at front to be renewed
- Gates to be repainted
- Car park to be reinstated, shrubs to be planted, section of fencing to be installed and section of concrete near entrance to be repaired, all at developers cost.

(b) Church

Work carried out since the last meeting

- Main external notice board replaced

Future Work Required

- Minor pointing to ridge tiles and replacement of eaves pointing
- Soffits to be repainted
- Gutters and downpipes to be checked and cleared where necessary
- Remedial work to be carried out on floor repairs

(c) Presbytery

Work carried out since last meeting

Nothing to report

Future Work Required

- Both chimneys to be repointed and lead flashing re-dressed
- Remedial work to be carried out following the electrical inspection
- Garage to be repainted and guttering repaired
- Gutters and downpipes to be checked and cleared where necessary

(d) Grounds

Work carried out since last meeting

- Garden and hall car park tidy up exercise

Future Work Required

- A section of the church rear garden to be laid out for presbytery use following construction of the Garden Room
- Tree stump in the rear garden to be removed

10. Any Other Business

- It was noted that the Parish is due for a Fire Safety inspection in the near future

- Consideration to be given to holding a General Purposes meeting in addition to the Finance Committee meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 18th February 2022

Minutes approved

Signed:

Chris Croker - Finance Committee Chairman

Date: