

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
Pastoral Parish Council
Monday 10th March 2025
Minutes

Attendees: Bernard Hunter, Fr Michael Copps, Patricia Jolly, Lorna Spears, Robin Shearmur, Matthew Ives, Peter Robson, Damian Atkinson, Cynthia Oji & Donna Patros

Fr Michael opened the meeting with a gospel reading.
We prayed for Martin's father and the family.

Apologies. Martin Sharkey, Geraldine Mansbridge

Minutes The minutes of the January meeting were approved.
The meeting scheduled for February had been cancelled – not enough business.

Matters arising

1. Matthew reported that we have booked a coach for the Diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham on 24th May, with 10 seats reserved for St Anne Line at their request.
2. Bernard reported some proposed changes to the structure of the website, intended to make clearer to visitors how much activity there is.

It was noted how much the website has improved over recent times.

The visitor statistics mentioned last meeting will be circulated together with the proposed changes for PPC members' comments.

Action Bernard

Henrietta Suite Project

Cynthia outlined the progress to date with the help of the architect's plan that had been circulated. She told us that plans are soon to be published to the parish and feedback sought. Bernard cautioned that the team needs to be clear about how it will respond to feedback, especially if it is negative – bearing in mind that the basic design has been signed off by the PPC after an earlier consultation.

Bernard outlined rough cost estimates he had just received showing a total of £255,000. The PPC affirmed that the marked increase in projected cost and the changes in design were such that the PPC must sign off the project before any tendering takes place.

We considered that we had too little information to do that, and asked for more detail about the costings, while recognising they were necessarily rough estimates.

A higher and lower estimate for each item would be helpful, together with a list of ways to reduce costs with their implications.

There was significant concern from some about whether we needed to spend that amount to achieve what we need of the centre. Cynthia pointed out that nothing had been done for decades, and that this would last for years to come.

The revenue currently generated by the Becket Centre, and what might be generated in the future were discussed. To be confirmed, it was concluded that it would take very many years to recoup the cost of the project, but that that was not the project's purpose.

It was recognised that the main purpose of the centre is to serve the Parish, that we are limited in the number of spare slots in the Henrietta Suite, and that prevailing local rates limit the commercial charges we can apply.

While the overall design was not questioned, a number of issues were raised that require more information:

- what is the timeline? Given builders' current lead time to starting jobs, is it feasible that work can be done this summer? How quickly is PPC signoff required to achieve that?
- what is the design of the cleaner's store, and access from the Friary
- will soundproofing provide any significant benefit?
- why are the top half of windows to be blocked off?

Actions agreed: make large scale paper copies of the plan available;
arrange walk-arounds for PPC members (Tues 18th and Wed 19th at midday suited for most members); Michael would invite the Friars to attend too;
reconvene the PPC on Monday 24th March at 7:30pm just to re-visit the project.

Chairs and Tables

The PPC has been asked to authorise the purchase of chairs for the Henrietta Suite, needed regardless of its refurbishment. The recommended choice and the need and cost were accepted by the PPC. However, we require more information on whether some or all of the existing chairs should be retained for summer fete, outdoor mass or other purposes; and if so, where they would be stored.

The possible need of a further storage unit was raised and will be investigated by BH/DA. Approval for chair purchase was hence deferred.

Table choice and cost were also approved. However, it was thought likely that some of the rectangular tables should be retained. Approval for table purchase was deferred pending clarification of the number needed (which is also influenced by storage issues).

Liturgy

Damian described his work in recruiting members for a re-formed liturgy committee, which will start with limited ambitions/scope in the next month or two, and then build up. He has also taken responsibility for Eucharistic Ministers' visiting the sick & housebound. Damian described the planned introduction of Services of the Word and Holy Communion, mindful of the expected shortage of priests in the future. These are based on guidance from the bishops' conference, and we have produced local service sheets. One workshop and two services have been held, limited so far to readers and Eucharistic Ministers. The next workshop will be open to all parishioners, and the next services will take the place of weekday masses (midweek one month, Saturday morning the next). This will be advertised in the newsletter which will also highlight the need to our parishioners. That some would not like such services and plans was understood. Michael has agreed that service leaders would be inducted into that ministry by the PP.

Other measures to improve our resilience and reduce the workload on our priests are a meeting on Wednesday for anyone who might think of becoming a Deacon.

We are also advertising in the newsletter for couples who would like to help in marriage preparation. That has no lay involvement at present, though there had been in the past.

PPC Surgery

Members have volunteered covering all masses and will note any/all questions, comments, suggestions, complaints. Bernard will email separately with details and will advertise in the newsletter and ask the priests to announce this at the end of the masses.

Year of Prayer

Pete described the guided prayer programme that is taking place this week with 17 participants, an excellent leader, and support from 5 of our Friars.

Agenda items on the Small Grants committee and the PPC projects spreadsheet were deferred through lack of time.

Peter closed the meeting with a prayer.