

St Werburgh's Inaugural New Parish Council Meeting Wed 10th July 2024 at 7pm

Present: Tina Bainbridge, Lyn Williams, Gerry Tighe, Cristina Dominte, Denise Jones, Lal Cook, Fr Paul, Bernice Meredith, Pat Floate, Marian McCarthy.

Apologies: Stephen Tierney, Stephen Hutchinson (has Covid but would normally attend as minute-taker)

Fr Paul opened the meeting with a welcome to all, saying that he has always worked with a Parish Council (PC), which acts as a governing 'Cabinet' for the parish. Fr Paul said that he will always bring all issues to the PC, bringing members into confidence (except where inappropriate); in return he asked that members are always honest about matters. The PC is there to share the workload of running the parish, taking some of the workload off his shoulders. The PC, which has grown out of the parish renewal programme of the last 18 months, will provide a transition mechanism for the next appointed Parish Priest.

Fr Paul distributed paperwork showing the scheduled dates for the PC meeting for September 2024 to July 2024, and a bullet-point draft PC Constitution. He also distributed a copy of the questionnaire which will need to be submitted to the Diocesan offices prior to the Bishop's visitation to St Werburgh's over the weekend of 28th September. He emphasised that this is a Parish submission, not a Parish Priest submission and so completing this document will be the main focus of the next PC meeting on 12th September.

Fr Paul then handed over to Lyn, at the same time acknowledging to the meeting the work done by the four members of the RSG to reach the point where a PC has now been formed.

Communication

Lyn emphasised that this meeting was all about getting to know each other, stressing that a key point of the success of the PC is good communication. The PC must be a listening entity, always prepared to listen to and discuss with parishioners what ever arises. This message is vital to get across to parishioners; the PC must be the 'eyes and ears' of the parish community. When it was formed the RSG had a blank sheet, but now looking back it is clear how much things have moved forward, which has been and is undoubtedly Spirit-led.

As a means of the PC members all getting to know each other a little more, Lyn posed three questions::

Q1 What do you do when you are not in church?

Q2 What is the one thing that is important about the way of working in the PC team?

Q3 How would a close friend describe you, in one word?

Going round the room provided a very helpful snapshot into each person's background, and as regards Q2, several words came to the fore – communication, listening, honesty, relationships and not taking things personally, not imposing unduly...

Lyn moved on to practicalities as regards communications for the operation of the 'portfolio' areas for the parish. She made the point that in effect the RSG is now more or less superseded by the new PC structure and what is now crucial is getting the transition to the new PC function bedded in, with effective communications in place.

- Stephen Hutchinson (SH) is keen to help wherever possible in facilitating communication, particularly in the area of email flow.
- The parish 'Tekkie team' is geared up to create a number of 'generic' email addresses, one for each 'portfolio' area (plus others as needed). These will be widely publicised in the parish.
- These generic emails will provide all parishioners with a route to the correct place for queries, suggestions, offers of help, etc, There will be an additional fall-back 'admin@werburghs.....' email address, monitored by SH, who will be able to route emails to the correct place.
- It is very important that email chains must be stopped, so that 'copy all' use is not common and that everything does not go centrally to Fr Paul. It is important that the PC members have the confidence in their 'authority' role for their portfolio, and work accordingly, knowing that they have Fr Paul's backing!

It is recognised that there will be a crucial transition period while people get used to this new communications system. There will be further activity on this email set up over the next month.

Communication and the PC

In terms of how the PC will work, Lyn suggested that the process should be:

- a week before a PC meeting, each member should check in with people in the 'lower' portfolio groups and send in to the PC Chair any items for the PC agenda
- SH will compile the PC agenda and send out ahead of the meeting
- SH will attend the PC meeting and produce minutes, including actions.

Having had this introductory PC meeting, there is now a need for each Portfolio holder to communicate to the 'lower' groups in the portfolio, explaining the communications structure. Further work and support is needed here to get things set up.

Finally Lyn mentioned how Rowton fits into this whole structure. Rowton is fully part of the St Werburgh's Parish, but there are some clear differences in how that small community operates. RSG has engaged with Rowton and has enlisted Judith Done to work actively as a link between the two congregations, with a commitment on both sides to ensure that the Rowton Community is always in the loop.

Questions/comments arising

Fr Paul asked each person if they had any questions/comments following all the information that has been provided:

Lal would like some help in getting more confident and practised in using the IT that is needed for the whole communication area. This will be arranged when Lal flags up the need.

Pat said that September would be a good time to carry out another 'what would you like to get involved in?' survey to the Parish. This will be arranged.

Marian made the point that some of the portfolios are much bigger than others, which focuses where more involvement from people could be sought.

Tina suggested that an Open Parish meeting should be scheduled in September so that all parishioners have an opportunity to meet the PC members. [Post PC Meeting discussion in RSG decided that this would be better postponed until towards Christmas, when the PC has had a chance to bed in.]

Gerry emphasised that the 150 years Parish anniversary is in 2025 and that should be marked, including recognising the role of two key parish priests, Canon Welch and Canon Chambers.

Fr Paul made the point that the three top voted elected PC members all said 'yes' to the invite to join the PC, Gerry with a proviso that he would serve for one year.

Cristina asked about how diaries could be shared across the portfolios and wondered if there is a need for a common calendar. Fr Paul suggested that the purpose of the Parish Diary, published both on-line and in booklet form, provides exactly what Cristina is asking about.

Denise commented that she was very pleased to understand that the email flow around the parish is going to improve, even if it may take a while!

Date of next meeting

Thursday 12th September at 7.30pm

The meeting closed before 8.30pm and a delicious shared supper followed!

Many thanks to all attendees!

Marian

15th July 2024