

## St Werburgh's Parish Council Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### **Present:**

Parish Priest:	Fr Paul Shaw
Finance:	Denise Jones
Housekeeping and Hospitality:	Cristina Dominte
Liturgy:	Lyn Williams
Outreach:	Lal Cook & Tina Bainbridge
Social:	Bernice Meredith, Pat Floate
Members without portfolio:	Tina Bainbridge, Steve Tierney, Gerry Tighe
Admin Assistant:	Stephen Hutchinson

### **Apologies for absence.**

Buildings and Maintenance: Marian McCarthy.

### **Prayer and Introduction by Father Paul.**

The council will have eight meetings per year. There are three non-portfolio members. Members have a three-year term of office. The role of the chair (currently PP) will last six months, then a new chair will be elected. The Parish Diary (soon to be published) will give the dates of the PC meetings (along with the dates of all other Parish events).

## Parish Council Member Lead Reports.

### **Lyn - Liturgy.**

Lyn said she would like the focus of the Liturgy group to be on more prayer groups. There are already a number of small prayer groups (including Pat's prayer group and her own). She suggested 'Welcome Back' Masses, for people and families of those who have been married or baptized here. These could be modelled on our Welcome Back Mass for recently bereaved every November. The Holy Hours and rosary have had very good feedback. She suggested that the contact leads from all other groups could develop contacts within each group to promote new ideas. She gave as an example the extremely successful and well attended Youth Mass. Lyn also mentioned that there is now a drum kit for Youth Mass. Lyn highlighted the Pentecost Mass as having been particularly special.

### **Cristina – Housekeeping and Hospitality.**

Many of the components under this area are well-established and running well, supported by fantastic volunteers. These include cleaning and housekeeping, linen and silver. Gardening is still a developing area where additional support would be welcome, although an increasing number of volunteers are attending our sessions.

The immediate priorities for housekeeping and hospitality are to: bring some of the great volunteers supporting these areas together and open channels of communication, so any ideas for improvement are taken to the Parish Council; where appropriate, create back-ups for the established teams; and finally, continue to develop the gardening area to develop consistency.

### **Bernice, Steve Tierney and Pat – Social.**

Pat has created a list for members of the social group and is working with Chris from the Web Team. Examples of particularly successful social events were mentioned such as 'Welcome Wednesdays', a schedule of talks up until Christmas, links with other portfolios, walks, talks and informal socials. There was a mention of the walk organised by Richard (on Sat afternoon) including a visit to the Ship Inn.

Steve Tierney mentioned the forthcoming talk by Cardinal Michael FitzGerald, who is a missionary Bishop. Currently living in Liverpool but moving to Ealing, the Cardinal is an expert in interfaith dialogue, especially Islam and Catholic interfaith dialogue. He has been a Vatican advisor and was made Cardinal by Pope Francis. He advised for the Regensberg address, and has spoken to the Iman in Abu Dhabi. He is coming to Chester on Nov 13<sup>th</sup>, and we wish to invite other Churches to join us. The Cardinal has said a proper agenda will be helpful to him. The visit has been checked and approved by Bishop Mark.

Pat mentioned the successful trips, walks, talks and socials. Also mentioned was the Friday evening drop in for new parishioners. Of particular note was the outing organised by Tina (Sister Act), and a (possible) visit to Bents Garden centre near Warrington. (£12 per head). The garden visit was currently open to the Welcome Wednesday people but Pat mentioned that she would like to open this to the rest of the Parish (via newsletter) as well as to the Hospice.

### **Lal & Tina – Outreach Team**

Lal will be covering daytime events, Tina to cover weekends and evenings. Tina stressed the importance of a bereavement group, mental health group, and links with Primary and Secondary schools, as well as working with young people.

### **Denise – Finance.**

Denise is overseeing the management of all Parish income and expenditure and monthly reconciliation of the bank statement via OPAS (Online Parish Accounting System). Denise also produces the annual financial return for the Diocesan Finance Office.

Parish income is from various sources including plate collections, weekly envelopes, standing orders, votive candles, and publications and flower collections. There are also ad-hoc donations from weddings and legacies.

Weekly counting and banking require a team of two people (Denise plus one other). Six volunteers are currently being trained. The long-term aim is for this newly trained team of six (and any others that volunteer) to work in pairs.

Parish expenditure is mainly processing payment of invoices via cheque, and monitoring payments made via DD/SO and Diocesan Finance Office BACS transfers.

Denise also manages Planned Giving and Gift Aid (via the OPAS system), weekly offertory envelopes and standing orders, and works with the Diocesan Gift Aid Coordinator.

The financial audit on Wednesday went very well.

Fr Paul added that we were audited by external auditors (for the first time). It was a four-hour audit. Nearly all of the questions were answered successfully. The only issue was the missing minutes of the finance committee for previous meetings. These minutes to the financial committee meetings are now being taken.

Denise mentioned that standing orders are trending over envelope donations. Fr Paul added that we have seen big variations in donations since last year, especially in plate collections which went up this year. Since one third of the Church's income comes from cash this is a significant amount. There was some talk of introducing a card reader at the back at church, especially as we seem to be moving towards a cashless society.

## **Buildings & Maintenance (Including Porch and Day Chapel)**

- **Porch & Day Chapel (Celia Murphy Room)**

Fr Paul stated that the Day Chapel and Porch plans will be going to Historic Churches Commission in October. Hopeful that will go through. The Porch is being completely redecorated as is the Day Chapel. The Day Chapel will now become a meeting room with its own kitchen area. This is all due to a generous legacy from Celia Murphy. (Hence the name of the Day Chapel as the Celia Murphy Room. Also, a generous donation has been received from Kathleen Rivas who lived to 101, putting her longevity down to no men & no drink! The church currently has an income of £120,000 and outgoings of £100,000.

We are currently looking for someone to 'get on board' with health and safety from the parish.

- **Sound system and lighting.**

Sound system including the loop system is now fully working. The lighting in the church is going to be completely renewed. A more subtle (led) lighting will be used, which will be more energy efficient too.

## **Gerry**

Gerry stated that he saw his job as member of PC as bringing continuity between the old Council and the new Council. His main current responsibility is organising the Altar Servers, who are from a very wide age range. One is over eighty, a good number in their teens and early twenties. There are also senior servers.

Gerry works closely with the parents of the Altar Servers. There are twenty-four in total. Fr Paul expressed the view that we are all very grateful for the Altar Servers: Charlotte, Sean, Eva and Gerry (who are new Servers); Eliza, Gregory, Pranay and Stephanie who are starting University Courses in the next couple of weeks. Special thanks extended to Pranay Ross who is not only starting at UCL but moving with his family to London in the coming days.

Fr Paul expressed how very grateful he was for the tremendous work Gerry did with retention amongst our Altar Servers, as so many parishes find theirs disappearing in the teenage years. This was seen as especially commendable. Almost all our Altar Servers will be present at Bishop Mark's visitation.

## Parish Members Ideas and Suggestions

### **Outreach - Tina**

Tina offered to help Lal with outreach including Liturgy & music.

### **Goal of the Parish Council – Fr Paul**

Fr Paul greatly values Parish Council and sees the aim as acting as a sounding board for new ideas and his own cabinet in making all parish decisions together.

### **Ideas suggested by Parish Members – Fr Paul**

- The Sign of Peace.

An email was sent about how to deliver the Sign of Peace. The writer had expressed concern that some people like to shake hands, and he feels awkward when he does not reciprocate. He wanted to know what the recommendations were.

There was some concern especially in the light of the Covid scare, that shaking hands would spread germs. This concern has largely faded now, and people are beginning to shake hands as well as nodding.

Fr Paul mentioned that at Primary School children prefer to nod, whereas in Prisons and Secondary Schools the exchanging of the Sign of Peace is usually omitted.

The council agreed with Fr Paul that the best approach was to watch body language of person sitting near to you. If a hand was offered, then shake hands, otherwise a simple nod and smile would suffice. Pat emphasized that the most important thing was to smile. Being sensitive to other people's feelings was seen as the most important factor. Lyn agreed to put this in writing for the newsletter.

- Signposting for mental health advocacy

Another email offered signposting for mental health advocacy. Lyn suggests he speaks to representatives from the Parish Council or a select group of people to find out exactly what he intends to offer, as the whole area of support for mental health issues needs to be carefully addressed with regards to safeguarding. Mental health

issues are certainly seen as a growing concern, and support to families of people suffering from mental health issues was seen as something that could be offered (in terms of signposting). This welcome offer from a Parishioner will be explored by a small group of PC members.

### **Dementia Support Group – Lyn/Tina**

The Outreach team could offer a Dementia support group and a possible Suicide support group. Lyn mentioned that a support group for Dementia sufferers and their carers could be offered. A lady in the parish has offered to run a dementia cafe. Tina expressed her concern that running a dementia cafe at the Church introduces a potential minefield of problems. Carers almost always cannot and do not want to leave the people they are looking after, so we would have to provide support for both carer and their loved one.

Lyn suggested we could invite dementia sufferers and carers to the Welcome Wednesdays. There are also people in the Belong Care Home that could be invited to Welcome Wednesdays.

As a council, it was felt we should mull over how to go forward with regards to support for mental health.

### **Communications - Lyn**

Lyn met with Chris Proudfoot about allocating email addresses to leads of heads of department within the restructured Parish Council.

With regards to the St Werburgh's website, work needs to be done to remove old articles from the past, update the site to display the new email addresses for contacts, add a news page. This was seen as something that should not be rushed, and Fr Paul suggested February 2025 as a suitable time to start work on this.

### **Register of Interests - Denise**

Denise suggested a 'Register of interest' where members of the congregation could express their ideas and suggestions. Such as a league table for top 3 outreach activities, top 3 liturgy activities. It is also the intention to publish the diary page for the month on the website and notice board.

### **Fr Paul's Admin Assistant – Stephen**

Stephen Introduced himself to Council members and said how much he enjoyed Fr Pauls' sermons at the Sunday evening service, and how much he enjoys working with Fr Paul.

### **Any other business**

Pat mentioned the social groups as well as the library & history group. Dominique – has expressed an interest in offering ideas for the church library.

Lyn mentioned her concern that there was some uncertainty over what should and what should not be displayed on the notice board. There were some notices that might be seen as purely commercial, and Fr Paul expressed his wish that we do not support purely commercial ventures, i.e. a free concert for the Messiah is fine, but 'StoryHouse' adverts were not OK. Ultimately the Parish Priest should have final say over what is on the notice board.

Fr Paul closed the meeting in prayer for those known to us who needed praying for.

**Next meeting: Thursday 7.30pm 10th October.**