THE UNITED BENEFICE OF
HENLEY-ON-THAMES WITH REMENHAM

PARISH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, HENLEY-ON-THAMES

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parochial Church Council
held on
Tuesday 25th March 2008
at 8.00 pm
in the Chantry House

PRESENT

The Rector, Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Andy Butler, George Constantinidi, Stuart Crippen (Treasurer), Anne Forrest, Andy Hurst, Stephen Nichols, Geoffrey Taylor (Churchwarden) and Martin Whittaker .

The meeting was preceded by a celebration of the Eucharist in St Leonard's Chapel.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Hopkins (Secretary).

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last PCC meeting on the 25th of September were approved with one amendment. Section 9 should read "The Rector reported that a certificate for safety regarding the boiler was still awaited." The minutes thus amended were signed by the Chairman.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4 TREASURER'S REPORT

The draft accounts for 2007 were presented by the Treasurer, who will ask the accountants to make one or two amendments before the APCM. Total unrestricted income was £134,133; total unrestricted expenditure was £138,367, a small loss. Stuart had warned the PCC at previous meetings that a small loss was to be expected. The total has been improved by a transfer of the Munro fund from restricted to unrestricted funds. On paper, our COIF shares have increased in value by £1,127, although this paper increase is likely to be reversed this year as share prices decrease.

The church's total funds stand at £206,335, down from £213,154 last year. Stuart will ask the accountants to identify £20,503 shown as "Other voluntary income" as donations to the Organ fund. Andy Hurst asked who our debtors are: the accounts include as "Debtors" a record of Gift Aid payments due to us from the government which have not yet been paid. It was noted that the amount of legacies will naturally vary from year to year.

The Organ fund had received £20,503 and paid out £15,647. As all of this money was planned as spending for 2008, including this surplus would misrepresent the overall financial position. To avoid this, the Organ fund expenditure is reported as equal to the income.

The expenditure on "Water" for Chantry House Running Costs should read "Water, Heating and Lighting".

Our major fundraising focus this year has continued to be our link Diocese in Lima, Peru, and the Organ Fund. The parish did not quite meet its objective of donating a total of approximately 10% of its income to charities, emergency funds and other good causes. This objective may need to be reconsidered in future years.

It is PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (if possible), which equates to approximately six months' unrestricted payments, to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time. The balance of £58,294 on unrestricted funds excluding the capital value of the COIF shares fell short of this target by approx. 15%.

Further expenditure is expected to pay for costs arising from the Quinquennial inspection.

Stuart asked for the Accounts to be accepted by the PCC and passed on to the APCM. There were no further questions, and the accounts were accepted nem con.

5 MATTERS FOR DECISION AND REPORT

Martin Whittaker spoke on the plans for installing a lift in the Chantry House. When the Chantry House was renovated, a lift was not included for cost reasons. The residue of the restoration fund stands at around £45,000. The costs of installing a lift will be more than this, and significant fundraising would be required.

Richard Oxley of Oxley Conservation architects has been asked to look into how a lift can be installed which English Heritage would approve. The PCC was asked to approve payment of £2,500 + VAT to Oxley Conservation to undertake a feasibility study. George Constantinidi said that there was less than a 50-50 chance of a positive response from the study, but that a lift would be of benefit. The PCC felt that it was worth investigating, and agreed to the study being done. The Rector signed the contract for the feasibility study.

Geoffrey Taylor spoke about the purchase of a statue of Our Lady. As discussed at previous meetings, an anonymous donation has been made sufficient to buy a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be placed in the church. The copy of a statue by Andrea Della Robbia is no longer available, but the Diocesan Advisory Committee is likely to approve such a purchase. Geoffrey suggested that the Rector and churchwardens, and anyone else interested, should form a sub-committee to find a suitable statue and identify where it might best be placed. The PCC agreed.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY

There were no Health and Safety matters to be discussed.

7 AOB

The problem remains of "fly parking" outside the church, and the Rector suggested that bollards be installed to prevent parking by those not on church business. Two large, fixed bollards could be placed at the corners of the boundary, and one or two movable bollards would be placed between them. These would be locked in place, and keys would be made available to all church members who might need to park in front of the church. Care should be taken when deciding the position of the bollards to allow access to the Almshouses and emergency services, and to make sure that the general public would still have access on foot. The Rector will investigate and consult on this, before reporting back to the PCC.

George Constantinidi asked about the status of the Organ Fund. This stands at around £44,000, of which £16,000 has been spent. A bill is expected of £24,000 including VAT for the new console, and £15,000 for installation of the console in the summer. Further funds are required then. Carol Brook-Partridge agreed to contact the Henley Standard and parishioners to let them know the current situation.

Anne Forrest asked that a few minor changes be made to the website, including mentioning that the Chantry House is available for hire.

8 PASTORAL MATTERS

There were no pastoral matters to be discussed.

The meeting closed with prayer at about 8.55pm.

Signed by the Chairman ……

Dated ……