

**St Mary the Virgin - Henley
Parochial Church Council
PCC Meeting Tuesday 15th January 2019
7.30 pm Mass St. Leonard's Chapel
8pm Meeting in Chantry House**

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Father Jeremy, Sheila Croton (Secretary & Dean Rep), Sue Hockley (Churchwarden), Carol Brook-Partridge (Churchwarden), Kathryn Turner (Treasurer), Sally Batty, Robin Hartley, Martin Whittaker, Stephen Nichols, Sarah Bell, Richard Fletcher, George Constantinidi, Joan Edwards and Julian Elkington

ALSO PRESENT: Joan Bennet and Geoff Riglar (Bell ringers)

APOLOGIES:

Jim Hurst, Stuart Crippen (Dean Rep), and Mary Wood

This was an extraordinary PCC Meeting which had one item on the agenda

Church Bells Replacement Project

Father Jeremy opened the meeting by inviting Joan to explain the project. Papers had been sent to the PCC with all the information relating to this project including details of the funding and programme of works.

Joan reiterated the main reasons for the work being undertaken and the benefits to the bell ringers, the Town of Henley and the church.

1. The present 7 and tenor (8) are too heavy to ring up and be rung by the current band and the likely band in the foreseeable future.
2. There are no bells light enough for us to teach young people. Youngsters currently learn at Shiplake, Nettlebed and Hambleden, and once having made friends there, do not switch to Henley.
3. The 2 and 5 can only be rung by experienced ringers.
4. A lighter 8 would enable young people to be trained and also for them to ring on all the bells.
5. A 'dumb bell' would make it easier to train all learners- silently!
6. Sound control would enable the practice to be quieter for surrounding properties.
7. The tonal quality of the bells would be improved, since 1813, when the bells were cast, was a poor period, and the bells were last worked on in 1928.
8. Mechanising the Sanctus bell would enable it to be rung during services.
9. The current movement level in the tower is widely known to be excessive. Lighter bells would reduce that.
- 10. We are not asking for any church money. We may ask for a short term bridging loan pending the VAT refund.**

Further papers were distributed, copies of which are with these minutes.

Father Jeremy thanked Joan for her hard work and opened the meeting for questions.

Several questions were related to finance. Both how the money was to be administered and how the money was to be raised. It was agreed that all funds for this project will go through the Church accounts via the treasurer, Kathryn Turner. She will collate all the income and pay all the invoices. This will prevent issues related to charitable status and VAT refunds. Stephen made the meeting aware that VAT refunds could change in the current political climate.

It was acknowledged that the payments will be made in instalments but the donations for the bells will be paid into the accounts before work begins. The grant money will be pledged but not paid across to the funds until the work is complete. This will require a bridging loan from the church accounts. This will be set out in the final papers before the order for work is placed. Martin highlighted the issues he has had when trying to gain grant monies and we should be wary that promises are not income until we receive something in writing stating clearly the grant has been awarded and under what terms it will be paid to us. Other members of the PCC were also concerned that there may not be sufficient funds for this project, however, it is clear that no order will be placed until sufficient money is pledged.

Father Jeremy also raised concerns that the bells would be out of action for six months. However, Joan clarified that if the bells are to be cast before the old ones are removed the "downtime" would be considerably less. (Two months was quoted)

Martin Whittaker raised a question as to how the sound control would work. Geoff responded to this saying this is sound control and not sound proofing. The bells are covered so as to minimise the sound during practices but with the doors open the bells will be clearly heard but possibly not so loudly due to the fact the new bells are lighter.

A discussion was had in relation to dedications on the bells. The current ones are not dedicated to anyone as far as Joan is aware but if they are the dedication will be transferred to the new bells. Similarly, all those donating a bell will be able to choose an inscription for their particular bell. This would be carried forward when these bells wear.

Martin suggested we involve both our architect and his structural engineer as soon as possible and Joan agreed this was an excellent idea.

There was some concern about workers being affected by the radiation of the mast on the top of the tower and this will be checked. The Bell company will have a Health and Safety policy which will be checked before work begins. Geoff pointed out that no one is working up the tower for more than a few days during the

changeover from the old bells to the new. The concern about radiation was raised by Joan when the mast was first installed and the outcome was, they were not a danger to bell ringers. The signal goes from the top of the mast outwards and there is no effect at ground level.

George asked if there was any reason an appeal for 100k could not be launched for the bells but by St Mary's. Stephen was less comfortable with asking the town for money. Sally felt the town benefit from the bells and they should be asked if they wish to make a donation. Father Jeremy agreed there could be no harm in asking the Town Council.

Martin felt there was a concern with using volunteers to move the bells although he appreciated this could reduce the costs. Joan assured him the people doing this work were supervised and it was more about having the manpower to assist than doing anything structural. Joan advised Kathryn to check with our insurers if there were likely to be any issues around the volunteers helping with the work.

Stephen then asked several questions related to the tone, key and other musical affects of the bells. As far as he was able Geoff answered these queries. The note is determined by the weight of the bell. The bells will sound "lighter" and "higher" because they are lighter in weight. He also stated the layout of the bells would be the same as it balances out the stress in the tower when rung.

When asked if there would be damage to the Baptistry, Geoff stated no one could ever say definitely "No" due to human error but if any damage was caused the people causing the damage would need to cover the repair costs

Stephen asked how the supplier would be chosen and Joan said a small group of people who understand the project well would be involved in making the decision. Geoff pointed out there are a limited number of bell foundry's currently only two in this country.

Joan finished by adding we have an excellent band of ringers who will continue to practice at Shiplake while our bells are out of action.

End of Questions and Answers

The motion below was proposed by Sue Hockley and seconded by Carol Brook-Partridge

"The PCC authorise the go ahead of the Bell Replacement Project subject to sufficient funds being pledged and a timed cash flow programme and project plan being produced, after consultation with our architect and structural engineer. "

The vote was unanimous for the project to proceed.

Signed by the Chairman

Dated