

St. Felix Parish Advisory Council (PAC): Extra Meeting

Monday 31st May 2021

Minutes

Those present:

Stephen Badcock (*Chairman*), Fr. John (*Parish Priest*) Doug Birchall (*Minutes Secretary*), Alan Lamberton.

Apologies: David Richardson.

The meeting began at 7:13pm. FR John thanked everyone for attending, and explained that, since we had not had a PAC Meeting for several months as a result of Covid restrictions, and those restrictions were still in place, he felt that it was appropriate to have a meeting with a reduced number attending. The purpose of this was to review what had happened in the last year since the beginning of the Lockdown, and to discuss how we might go forward once Lockdown was eased, which now seemed likely to happen in the foreseeable future.

1. Financial Update

Since David, the Parish Treasurer, was not present due to illness, Alan Lamberton undertook to give a summary of the Parish financial situation as far as he knew it, and in the light of the recent meeting of the Parish Finance Committee. (which he had attended).

Alan said that there was some confusion at present because, with offertory payments, a number of people were moving from using envelopes to paying by bank standing orders. This had resulted in a shortfall of about £7000 on last year; most of this resulted from the loss of the Giftaid element in the Convent's contribution. Stephen commented that this illustrated the importance of having Standing Orders Giftaided. Alan said that Standing Orders yield a regular amount in income, whereas sums given by envelopes often vary.

The Parish Accounts have been submitted to the Diocese, and we await the results of their examination.

Alan produced copies of a recent article from the Diocesan newspaper, which introduced Sandra Portas. Sandra has recently taken on the role of part-time Stewardship and Fundraising Co-ordinator for the Diocese; she has previous working experience in the City of London in the banking sector, and for regional and national charities in fundraising roles. After a period of induction, she plans to visit a number of parishes to study the ways in which they approach fundraising, and work with them to suggest how they might work to improve their performance. The meeting agreed that this was a good development, and the sharing of different procedures and ways of fundraising was likely to be beneficial.

Stephen added that George Babington has agreed to take over the role of Gift Aid Co-ordinator from Alan, and Alan has undertaken to show him how to carry this out.

2. Church Maintenance

Stephen reported that the fire alarm system in the Parish Hall had recently developed a fault. The company responsible for its maintenance had inspected the mechanism, and advised that the control box outside the kitchen door possibly needed replacing. Stephen is waiting to hear back from the company.

/Alan...

Alan reported that there were some loose wall-tiles in the Gents' toilets, and Chris O'Brien had undertaken to fix these.

Stephen suggested that there should be a person designated to be responsible for faults and problems with the fabric of the hall; a first step could be to establish a "diary" or faults log, in which to record any faults or problems with the fabric of the hall which required attention.

3. Future Use of the Parish Hall

Stephen said that it is not yet certain that 21st June will be the date for all Covid-related restrictions to be eased, and at least some restrictions are likely to continue after that date. We are therefore limited in what events may be permissible after mid-June, and hiring the Hall out may not be feasible for some time yet.

Stephen suggested that later in the year, when such a thing might be possible, we could hold a parish social event of some description, probably making use of the outside area surrounding the Hall and Church. Among options to consider initially might be a Barbecue, and a Teddy Bears' Picnic, both of which had been successful in the past.

4. Outreach

Fr John commented that it was good to see how many people are currently attending Mass; some who previously came regularly have dropped off, but attendances generally are slowly increasing. He thought there was no real use in having a drive to increase attendances while restrictions were still in place; but he did suggest producing a leaflet aimed at those who have fallen off a regular attendance. Copies of this could be handed personally to these "lapsed" parishioners by volunteers, who could then report back on those who had moved away/died/permanently left. Lists of those to be approached could be compiled from the Parish Roll.

Alan commented that Sandra Portas, in the course of her review of parish fundraising, might well have some suggestions on how to encourage more people to attend. Among other suggestions might be a renewed prayer group, and groups for men and for young mothers. It was pointed out that with present restrictions, numbers attending group meetings are limited to six; but it is to be hoped that this will ease in due course.

5. Mass Times

Fr John reminded us that the Convent had been unavailable for lay parishioners to attend Mass since the beginning of Lockdown, and this was still continuing. This was the reason why he had introduced the 11:00am mass on Sunday at St Felix; over a time attendance for it had increased, and now attendances at 9:00am and 11:00am were about equal. Fr John had also begun celebrating a private mass for the Sisters on Sunday afternoons at the Convent; it was actually a violation of Canon Law for him to celebrate more than three masses on a weekend, but he felt justified doing so on a temporary basis while the present exceptional situation lasted. Once restrictions were eased, he thought we could revert to having just one mass at St Felix on a Sunday, either at 10:00am or 10:30am.

6. Children's Liturgy

Fr John had spoken to Pauline Mayes, and they thought that it would be best to re-start Children's Liturgy at the beginning of September 2021, which would tie in with the expected schedule for First Communions. There are now two teams in place to lead Children's Liturgy. Stephen added that a decision on when to re-start can be left for now; once restrictions are eased and new mass times are decided, the matter should fall into place.

7. Social events for the future

The meeting agreed that people were starting to miss the provision of coffee after mass, and would welcome the re-introduction of this when possible. Stephen commented that many in the Parish missed the monthly Lunch Clubs, which had also not been feasible during Covid restrictions. He asked that the sincere appreciation of the Parish be recorded for the work done by Team Felix in general, and particularly by Jenny Birchall in organising this programme of lunches and the numerous other social events which they had taken on over the past ten years or so. It was sad that Jenny and the rest of the team had decided that they were not prepared to resume their activities with Team Felix after the end of restrictions, but nobody had come forward volunteering to take over the running and organisation involved. The meeting agreed that their thanks and great appreciation be recorded for Team Felix and all their efforts and hard work over the years. Alan recalled that one very successful event had been the Afternoon Tea held two Christmasses ago, and wondered whether the ladies of Team Felix might be willing to put on an event of this nature, say 3 or 4 times a year rather than every month. Doug undertook to put this idea to Jenny.

8. Any other business

Alan commented that the numbers of Servers at Mass had reduced, and asked whether there were any new recruits in prospect. Fr John said he was looking into the matter: he had written to several young parishioners who he thought might be suitable, and was awaiting their replies. He is hopeful that there will be more in prospect.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm

Doug Birchall

Minutes Secretary

10th June 2021