

Church Hall Meeting Minutes; Tuesday August 10th, 2021.at 1930.

Chair Rosemary Bolton introduced to the assembled group some of the Trustees of the All Saints Charity and especially those who would be called to speak. (An incomplete list of all attendees is included at the end)

A prayer was led by the Vicar

1 To establish the purpose of the meeting.

Chair expressed appreciation that so many were in attendance for this meeting to explore the future of our Church Hall. She emphasised that the Hall is well used by the community but that the management of it that was in need of volunteer support as the church is now in crisis since being closed in the pandemic.

2 A statement on the relationship between the Church and the Hall.

Colin Bird, Treasurer to the All Saints PCC explained that the Charity owns All Saints Church and St John's Hall together. Although he is currently Treasurer of both, formally he arranged for another treasurer to manage the Hall accounts on his behalf. Thanks to volunteers the Hall used to make a surplus, but since the pandemic it, and the Church have suffered losses of income. He briefly outlined that PCC authorised him to move money from funds for specific needs into our General Fund in order to pay our substantial annual running costs. (His experience elsewhere in the Diocese of St Albans informed his assertion that "most churches with halls have lost substantially in the pandemic"). To date the pandemic had resulted in losses of some £43,000.00. This has been covered by the transfers (£20,000.00) and a recent Gift Day (£23,000.00). Chair invited questions and there were none.

3 Acknowledgement of contributions of the community/congregation to the upkeep and running of the hall over the years.

The Vicar, Rev Canon Jo Loveridge spoke of the debt of gratitude owed to members of All Saints who have contributed over the years to the care of the hall and its surroundings. The main burden of the management of the hall now falls on too few people who are willing to support this much used community asset.

4 Management of the Hall.

Martin Penny, Parish Administrator informed the meeting that the booking system shows 77 bookings for the current month (August). The rates are commercial and bench-marked against other halls locally.

Janet Bird, Churchwarden added that St John's Hall receives no annual subsidy as does another community hall in Hertford but is supported by All Saints Church. She added that the booking system is set up to allow flexible time frames for use of the hall, sometimes just one or two hours. The hall is not hired out on a Saturday evening out of respect to the neighbours after historical noise issues.

5 Future plans for the Hall including how those will be financed.

Chair invited Reg Harman to speak. Before outlining his ideas Reg pointed out that "so far any plans have been money oriented and lacking in imagination", informing the meeting that the Treasurer

had forgotten to mention a plan to demolish the Hall and build a block of flats. He sees huge potential in the Hall and its surroundings. Among these were the carpark, the land, the upstairs room, the chairs. He suggested a community garden, re-purposing the Annexe for extra accommodation. He wants a committee to explore 1 a community garden, 2 the room upstairs, 3 the car park.

The Treasurer responded. The upstairs room is a known fire risk as there is no fire exit. The Annexe is unusable, due to significant amount of asbestos in its fabric, and is already out of bounds. The PCC is obliged by its charitable status to maintain the Church first as it is Grade 2* listed, and sustainable finance for it has become a serious problem over the last five years eg heating is now £16,000 per annum and insurance is £8,000. The Trustees are legally responsible under charity law and have a duty of prudence to act responsibly and avoid exposing the charity's assets to undue risk. They cannot sell the Church, but the Hall with the land is an asset. Sketch plans submitted to EHDC were refused as the Hall is already a community asset and we cannot set that asset aside. There is no proposal to demolish the Hall.

Chair invited other responses and several individuals spoke recognising that historically, even from the construction of the Hall in 1938, All Saints has had money problems. An idea (called a hybrid scheme) to develop the land sensitively (i.e., not a block of flats) and continue to offer the Hall for community use, to be approved by the PCC and a Hall committee could be a way forward. Concern was raised about increased traffic on Churchfields where the schools' parents park everywhere twice a day at arrival and departure times.

6. Serving the community through the Hall.

Nerine Chalmers, Churchwarden spoke of the church's desire to meet the needs of the community, and asked for a group to support this, at the same time acknowledging that we are without the funds to invest. She was supported by the Chair in her affirmation that we are a Christ-centred charity offering care and love to the community. Chair also confirmed that a Hall Committee would have to be a subcommittee of the All Saints PCC.

Martin Penny reported that Tony James had asked for a replacement volunteer some years ago and as Parish Administrator Martin had advertised but no one came forward. We would be grateful for offers.

Janet Bird asked that commitment should be at the heart of any offers of help. She had provided a sheet for volunteers.

7 Jo received a question regarding how any volunteering would be addressed, and she promised that she would make the first contact. She also promoted the two Saturday events in September that will focus on environmental interests. The meeting closed with a Blessing at 2035.

List of those present; Stuart Neale (camera club) Verity Tranter, Jackie Allen, Anne Rowarth, Brian Sykes, Dorothy Abel Smith, Peter and Joan Rawlings, Jenny Aitken, Renee Booker, Judith Agar. Pam Caddow, Derek and Helen Briggs, Jackie Earle, Reg and Gillian Harman, Margaret Manning, Luella Gracias, Richard Threlfall, Jane Sartin, Jill Geal, Daniel Chichester-Miles, Andrew Povey-Richards, Norman Anderson, Hilary Laidlaw, Jane Turner, Russell Norris, Mike Howarth, Kate Bath, Frances Spence, Jane Turner, Diane and Brian Warburton, I Nab, S Jozas, David Dean, Brian Dilly, Karen Palin, Lisa Meakin, Jan Goodeve, Bob Deering, Mary and Martin Penny, Rosemary Bolton, Janet and Colin Bird, Jo Loveridge, Nerine Chalmers, Emily Belfield, Sheila Hawarth