

St. John Fisher Church Parish Council
Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 23rd February 2009
at 7.30pm in the Upper Room

Present: Fr. Kevin Jordan, Edna Arulanantham, Ann Anderson, John Billiet, Maura Brady, Rob Browne, Michael Glynn, Jessica Gooch, Barbara Jukes, Karen Lury, Brian Morahan (Chair), Hilary O'Byrne, Kay O'Connor, Chris Thoumine

Opening Prayer and Welcome

Fr. Kevin opened the meeting with a prayer.

Apologies for Absence

All members were present.

Approval of Minutes 1st December 2008

The minutes for both the above meeting were approved and signed.

Matters Arising

No matters were arising from the minutes.

Premises Report

John Billiet had distributed a report on various aspects of the church premises which included:

- Small Hall - Renovation works which have been approved by the Finance Committee.
- Security – giving details of three instances of theft from the premises since November 2008.
- Fencing – Confirmation that the Finance Committee have agreed the cost of fencing between the sub station and parish hall. Planning permission will be required. Fr. Kevin reported that the local police had suggested an alternative type of trellis fencing but it was agreed that metal palings would be more effective.
- Keys to Parish Hall - The new outside door would have a security lock and a record of keyholders would be kept in the parish office.
- Blue Shed – now empty and clear for the use of Imperial Players/Pre-School.
- Hall Users Information Sheet – A list of regulations had been drawn up for hall users.

Rob Browne gave a summary of the up-to date situation with regard to the proposed plans by Pre-School to transform the external space adjacent to the parish hall where the blue and brown sheds are currently situated. The plans include the demolition of both sheds, the replacement of one shed and the development of a child-friendly play area. The existing brick storage area could then be used by the Imperial Players. Future plans could also include upgrading the toilets adjacent to the Social Club. Local government stipulates that a minimum 5 year tenancy agreement has to be in place in order for the grant to be approved. The plans and grant form have been sent to the Diocesan Surveyor, Stephen Peter, and his response is that the Pre-School needs to take out a tenancy agreement with the Diocese. Rob is attempting to set up a meeting for 6th March with Stephen Peter to discuss the legal implication to the parish if it allows the proposed works to go ahead, to explain the details of how a Diocesan tenancy agreement works, and give information about the process the Pre-School would have to follow to complete this agreement. It would also be helpful to speak to a similar sized parish who has successfully completed this process. Rob has liaised with the Chair of Pre-School and shown the planned work to the Social Club committee for their comments.

Detailed discussion took place with regard to various aspects of this project. i.e. if the Pre-School takes out a 5 year tenancy agreement with the diocese, whether the parish is still be entitled to the revenue from the Pre-School for the rental of the hall and outside space, and also who owns the equipment.

John Billiet will be looking into the various bids that have been received in detail and liaise with Pre-School on the exact requirements needed.

Boundary Fencing – It was decided that boundary fencing is a major priority and the works must be carried out as soon as possible.

Finance

Jessica Gooch had distributed a report giving details of the Diocesan Conference which she and Mary Evans had attended on 31st January and details of the parish accounts for 2008. We have yet to be notified of the assessment payable for 2009 but have been advised that this will be reduced from 33% to 29% of our assessable income.

The new storage area has been completed at a cost of £42,000. It was agreed that this was money well spent and Fr. Kevin had received very favourable comments from local residents. At the Diocesan Conference it was stated that the diocese is very keen for parishes to both save and increase their revenue. Detailed discussion took place with regard to the various options available. Given the present economic climate, it was thought very unwise to have a Planned Giving Drive. It was felt that, rather than having to go to the back of the church to put in money, the money boxes in the candle stands should be opened.

Various fund-raising events could be held for the Sick & Retired Priests' Fund.

With regard to the average collection per week per attendant, out of 201 parishes in the diocese, we had been placed 125th. It was felt that this was an unfair placing as this is a parish with a large number of young families. However, the annual mass count includes **all** who attend, including children, who would not be eligible to contribute financially.

Fr. Kevin made the observation that although mass attendance in the diocese had decreased by 23,000 over the past 10 years, the number of staff at both Archbishop's House and Vaughan House had greatly increased.

Update on Youth Initiatives

Maura Brady had distributed a report giving an update on the monthly coffee morning.

Following the distribution of a letter asking whether parish groups may be interested in running the coffee morning, the UCM will run the March session and SVP will run the April session. Some individuals have come forward to offer their help. It is hoped that more groups will come forward in the future to run a coffee morning.

The question was asked whether it was feasible to have coffee in the Church porch on Sunday morning but for reasons of numbers and health & safety, it was felt that this would not be possible.

Catechist's Report

Kay O'Connor had distributed a report giving details of preparation taking place in the parish for the reception of various sacraments.

The young people who went on World Youth Day are helping with a Year 8 meeting in the parish hall on Saturday, 28th February.

Fr. Kevin said that the diocese have employed David Burke as Youth Worker. Fr. Kevin has been updating the youth notice board at the back of the Church with various events and news and in the newsletter asks parishioners to take time to look at what's going on throughout the diocese. The musician and singer, Kate Nash, has also offered to help with youth activities.

Parish Priest's Report

Fr. Kevin had distributed his report giving details of the duties he had carried out and the meetings he had attended since the last meeting, to which he had nothing further to add.

Any Other Business

John Billiet asked whether the collection at the 10am Mass could be supervised more effectively. Discussion took place regarding the organization of collections especially at Easter and Christmas when there are much larger congregations.

It was unanimously agreed that the Parish Council would like to pass on their congratulations to Mrs. Anne Lyons on the outstanding report which St. John Fisher School had received from OFSTED. The diocesan report on Section 48 had not yet been received.

Suggestion Box – Fr. Kevin read out some of the suggestions which he had received:

A white board has been donated for use in the parish hall lobby

Candles – A suggestion was made to have electric candles. Fr. Kevin said that the present system of votive candles will be staying.

Lifts – A suggestion had been made that a mobile phone number could be made available for any parishioners wanting lifts to the doctor/dentist. Fr. Kevin said that notices had been put in offering lifts to church, but no one has taken up these offers.

Endeavour Magazine – Mary Evans sends copy of the parish newsletter every week which assists the editor with the publication for our parish. The quality and content of this magazine, which is distributed on a monthly basis to approximately 20 parishes, was discussed in detail. As papers and magazines are not selling, it was generally agreed that perhaps the parish could produce its own booklet on a quarterly, or six-monthly basis. Volunteers would be needed to help with publication and Fr. Kevin will make a request in the newsletter to ask people to come forward. Jessica Gooch offered to put the content of the new magazine on the website. Rob Browne suggested that perhaps at Christmas and Easter the magazine could be published with the parish newsletter. Brian Morahan suggested that the collating of the content and the publishing should be the responsibility of two different groups of volunteers.

Parish Information Booklet – Hilary O’Byrne is gathering information from parish groups and hopes to be able to collate all the information shortly.

School Information – Jessica Gooch informed members that there is a serious breakdown of information to parents when schools do not have a website to let them know whether they are open or not due to inclement weather. Kay O’Connor said that St. John Fisher School is setting up a text messaging system and a website.

Parish Council – Brian Morahan stated out that the 3 year term for the present Parish Council will be completed in September and that some memberships are up for re-election. Brian asked members to consider whether they wished to continue. Fr. Kevin pointed out that nominations are required for people to stand for election and gave a summary of those who are required to be members according to the Constitution.

Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting Monday, 18th May 2009 at 7.30pm in the Upper Room.

Future meeting dates were listed on the Agenda.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm with a prayer led by Fr. Kevin.