

St. John Fisher Church Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday, 31st October 2006

Present: Fr. Kevin Jordan, Ann Anderson, Edna Arulanantham, John Billiet, Maura Brady, Robert Browne, Michael Glynn, Jessica Gooch (present until 9.30pm), Barbara Jukes, Karen Lury, Brian Morahan, Hilary O'Byrne, Kay O'Connor (present until 8pm), Chris Thoumine

1. Opening Prayer and Welcome

Fr. Kevin began the meeting with prayer (Scripture Reading read by Maura Brady), welcomed the members of the new Parish Council, and thanked them for volunteering to be part of this group. He looked forward to working together for the good of this parish.

2. Apologies for Absence

All members present

3. Constitution of the Parish Council

Two sets of documents were available – one being a photocopy of the Code of Canon Law and the other a copy of St. Luke's Parish Council Constitution, to be used as an example, supplied by Fr. Robert Plourde. Fr. Kevin stressed that it was not necessary to make final decision at this meeting.

It was mentioned that six members of the Parish Council should be elected by the parishioners but only two people had put themselves forward or were nominated. Concern was expressed as to whether parishioners would ask how the Parish Council came into existence, and whether they have any interest. It was generally felt that parishioners are interested and concerned but are worried about getting involved themselves. The opportunity to become a member of the Parish Council had been mentioned at the Communion and Mission meeting which took place on 29th June, and at Mass and in the Newsletter during July and September. If people do not come forward, then Fr. Kevin is happy to ask people if they would be part of the group, and would be happy to have an election.

It was unanimously agreed that photographs of each of the members should be displayed at the back of the Church. Maura Brady will bring her digital camera at the next meeting to take photos.

Introduction:

- Paragraph 1 - Addition of Canon 520, 521, 536 in accordance with Canon Law.
- Paragraph 2 - Addition oflife of the Parish, in accordance with Canon Law.
- Paragraph 3 - AmendmentParish Priest, follow the aims and requirements of the Archbishop of Westminster.
- Paragraph 4 - Agreed

Administration:

- Paragraph 5 - (i) Addition ofParish Administrator or priest-in-charge.

Membership:

- Paragraph 6 - It was suggested that (ii) and (iii) should be combined.
 - (v) Chair of Finance Committee – Jessica Gooch
 - (vi) John Billiet Chairman of Property Management Committee
 - (vii) Hilary O'Beirne – Child Protection
 - (viii) Mary Evans – Minutes Secretary

- Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman – to be discussed later in the meeting under Any Other Business

The Parish Priest:

Paragraph 7 - Agreed

Minutes Secretary:

Paragraph 8 - It was agreed that Mary Evans should act as Minutes Secretary

Elected Members:

Paragraph 9 - It was hoped that there will be an election when the terms of office of the present members expired.

Representative Members and Parish Groups:

Paragraphs 12 & 13 - Fr. Kevin mentioned that it was not necessary to get representative members of different groups because people had not come forward: for example, two members of the Social Club had been approached but declined to be part of the group.

Co-opted Members:

Paragraph 14 - Agreed

Termination of Membership:

Paragraphs 15 -17 – It was suggested that members should read these paragraphs in their own time.

Paragraph 18 - Agreed. It was suggested that the Parish Council should hold four meetings per year which was agreed by members. It would be understood if any member felt they were not able to attend and could not give this amount of time.

Annual Parish Meeting ('APM'):

Paragraphs 19 - 25 – It was discussed as to whether a specific date is necessary; possibly the wording 'to be held annually' might suffice, but at least 28 days notice should be given.

Elections:

Paragraphs 26 – 31 – Term of office is normally 3 years after which an election will take place.

Meetings of the Parish Council:

Paragraph 32 - Agreed but should the situation arise when a special meeting has to take place, this will be arranged as soon as possible.

Paragraph 33 - Discussion took place with regard to the Provisional Minutes.

It was suggested that one of the following statements could be considered:
'Approved by the Parish Priest and Chairman of the Parish Council',
'Provisionally approved by Parish Council,
'to be formally approved at the next Parish Council meeting'
Copies of the minutes should be emailed to members.

Paragraph 34 - Agreed

Paragraph 35 - Agreed

Quorum:

Paragraph 36 - Agreed.

Fr. Kevin suggested that a caveat should be added that if the Parish Council calls a meeting in the absence of the Parish Priest, the only person who cannot

be removed from the Parish Council is the Parish Priest, and that the Parish Council cannot meet without the Parish Priest being present.

It was asked whether it was possible to have a meeting without the Parish Priest being present. Fr. Kevin pointed out that according to the Constitution it was possible, but according to Canon Law it was not.

In cases of urgency, Fr. Kevin, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman would be able to take immediate action and would then an additional meeting could be called with 6 members present if the Chairman approves.

Sub Committees:

At present we have not had time to set up any for sub-committees but we do have a Property Management Committee. Various projects are being considered with regard to replacing the Church doors, new siting of chairs, tables, equipment in the small hall, sheds being used by the Imperial Players. Fr. Kevin and John Billiet will be meeting Imperial Players on 17th November at 7.30pm at the Parish House. Any other members are welcome to join them.

Voting Within the Parish Council

Paragraph 39 - Agreed

Voting within the Annual Parish Meeting

Paragraphs 40 & 41 - Agreed

Amendments to the Constitution:

Paragraphs 42 - (i) & (ii) - Fr. Kevin pointed out that we are the first Parish Council for approximately 15 years and the vision for the future of the Parish is the responsibility of the new members. He asked that they read the Constitution and considered it carefully and it would be discussed further at the next meeting.

- (iii) Discussion took place as to whether a minimum of 50 signatures to approve any amendments to the Constitution was possibly too ambitious. It was generally felt that this number could be difficult to obtain. It was suggested that signatures could be obtained by attendees at the Annual Parish Meeting.

It was generally agreed that the Constitution should be available for all parishioners to read and could be displayed on the notice board in the Church. Copies could also be obtained from the Parish House and on our website.

Parish Property:

Paragraph 44 - Fr. Kevin felt that the existing groups who use the Parish Centre should be advised that their activities could need to be curtailed or re-scheduled as priority should be given for catechetics. There have been instances when Fr. Kevin and Kay have not been able to meet on their first choice of evening because another group is using the hall. It was asked how many members of these groups are Catholics and whether they are parishioners of St. John Fisher's, and also what do they offer our young people. We need to consider letting people use the hall for their parties, but on four consecutive occasions the hall was left in such a bad state that our cleaner could not clean it properly. Fr. Kevin feels that he has inherited a situation which should now be redressed. We have a duty to the parishioners to ensure that the Parish Centre is financially viable and kept in good order. It was suggested that contracts should be drawn up with those who use the hall on a regular basis. Volunteers

were asked to come forward to form a sub-committee – Rob Browne, Maura Brady, Edna Arulanantham, Ann Anderson.

4. Communion and Mission

Fr. Kevin reported that following the meeting which took place on 29th June, we have fulfilled the Cardinal's requirements and a Finance Committee now in place which consists of Jessica Gooch (Chair), John Hughes, John Billiet, Tim O'Keeffe, Francis Davis, Mary Evans, Jonathan Fernandes, Russell Arulanantham.

A Parish Council has now been formed.

Times of Masses – Mass is now at 7.30pm on Thursday evening to facilitate attendance by those who work during the day. During Lent an extra Mass was introduced at 7am on Wednesday morning.

Fr. Kevin asked whether members thought that changes should be made to these times. The consensus was that they should remain as they are. Other churches in the Harrow area do not have an evening Mass. More people attend Mass during the day on a regular basis, especially the elderly who make it their focus for the day. Fr. Michael Cullinan, who supplied for Fr. Kevin recently, remarked on the large number who attended weekday Mass.

Holydays of Obligation – There was a full attendance at 7.30pm Mass.

Morning and Evening prayer will be introduced during Advent before the weekday Masses.

A day of recollection is being arranged for musicians, servers and readers.

Ministers of the Eucharist – Two new ministers who speak Tamil have been commissioned.

Readers are to be recommissioned on Bible Sunday, the 2nd Sunday of Advent.

Supply of teaching materials – Fr. Kevin has been given a book rack and has ordered pamphlets from CTS, including the history of the life of St. John Fisher, to be put out on the welcoming table.

Refresher courses – CASE (Catholic Agency for Evangelisation) publishes resources on a quarterly basis for readers, servers, music groups, Eucharistic ministers, welcomers. A notice is put in the newsletter for these to be picked up from the Church porch.

Youth – Duncan Whelan, the youth worker for Harrow deanery, has now left and, therefore, there are no new projects to be considered.

Confirmation - An excellent new preparation course is now in operation which Fr. Kevin and Kay will implement.

5. Bishop's Visit

The role of the Parish Council should be consolidated. There should be a 5 year objectives plan which would give parishioners a feeling of continuity.

Detailed discussion took place with regard to our premises, including a plan for the adaptation of the hall which is not capable of providing meeting rooms for all of the groups which use it.

The possibility of an extra floor was suggested to include new stairs or a lift for the disabled.

Storage is also a priority. The outbuildings i.e. garage, sheds are all damaged and unsafe. As mentioned, Fr. Kevin will be meeting with the Imperial Players on the 17th November and the future of the storage sheds which they use will be included in that meeting. It is expected that a compromise will be agreed. Storage space is needed for chairs, tables and other equipment which is at present in the kitchen area of the hall and it is anticipated that the sheds will need to be removed. It was suggested that the whole area should be looked at professionally to maximise the space available, including dressing rooms, toilet facilities, and the toddler group shed, and that the result will benefit all of our parish groups

Volunteers - Pastoral plan including youth work - Fr. Kevin reported that he had asked three young people to be members of the Parish Council and they had declined because they are already involved in other activities and have other commitments. He asked how could we get young people interested in being part of our parish community. The outing to Thorpe Park was very enjoyable and successful but possibly enough. What we do is good. We have a very good number of altar servers, our Mass is welcoming, as is the music. Young people set an example to others. During Fr. McKenna's time in the parish, there were up to 75 altar servers. If a child comes to serve, Fr. Kevin would not turn him/her away. We have good equipment in the hall –

snooker tables, table tennis etc. but we do not have a youth worker. It was felt the outing to Thorpe Park was a good, positive experience and perhaps more imaginative days out could be considered. There was a Parish Consultation for the season of *At Your Word, Lord'*. Parishioners were asked to complete the questionnaire which covered all aspects of parish life, including youth. Barbara Jukes and Maura Brady offered to look into this. Mary Evans will supply the information.

It was suggested that perhaps the Society of St. Vincent de Paul could also involve the youth. Although there are not many parishioners who are in need, there are a number who are lonely and housebound and perhaps visits could be arranged. Chris Thoumine will speak to the SVP with regard to overseas aid and 'twinning' with a fellow group.

6. Planned Giving Drive

Mary Evans spoke to the meeting and gave details about the proposed planned giving drive to take place over 3 weeks in November – 11/12th, 18/19th and 24/25th. It is hoped to promote payment by standing orders and to encourage parishioners to join the Gift Aid scheme. In the address to parishioners it is proposed to speak about the proposed project of the Church porch – one of the side doors was hit by a vehicle several years ago not repaired properly. Rotting wood and poor hinges also add to the need for replacement doors. John Billiet suggested that powder coated aluminium doors with swivel hinges should be considered. The cost would be approximately £9,000 plus VAT to replace. Various colours were available including bronze, but these would be more expensive. St. John Fisher School have similar doors which were very satisfactory.

It was suggested that all the doors, should be replaced to include fire protection, toughened glass and adequate locking devices. With regard to the inside doors, the replacement cost would be in the region of £3,500 - £4,000 plus VAT. These doors should also have adequate locks so that if, for example, on a First Friday, a parishioner was on their own in the Church, they would be safe. This will enable our church to be more secure and could be open more often. It was agreed that the work should go ahead and 3 quotations should be obtained. The project would need careful consideration as it should be some considerable time before further work on these doors would need to be undertaken.

8. Reconciliation Room

Fr. Kevin has been told that at present the hearing of confessions in the Reconciliation Room is not in keeping with Diocesan regulations. If children come to confession on Saturdays at 10-10.30am or 5.15 - 5.45pm, they are not in a suitable environment. It was felt that children should be able to come to confession at any time and John Billiet was asked to look into the possibility of restoring the 'open style' of confessional which was used in the Church several years ago and on the same basis as our reconciliation services in Advent and Lent. This would ensure that child abuse could not take place but 'anonymity' would be respected.

Fr. Kevin proposed that the Reconciliation Room could be used as a repository, selling missals, rosaries, prayer books, prayer cards. etc. Members agreed that Fr. Kevin could look into this suggestion.

9. Any Other Business

It was proposed, and unanimously seconded, that Brian Morahan should be appointed as Chair of the Parish Council, and that Rob Browne should be appointed as Vice Chair.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting Monday, 5th February 7.30pm. The meeting closed at 10.10pm with prayer led by Fr. Kevin