

The Sacred Heart Church, Wadhurst and St. Peter's Rotherfield

**Minutes of the Parish A.G.M. on Sunday 22 November 2015
In the Sacred Heart Annexe at 12:00 hours**

1. WELCOME	ACTION
<p>The Chairman, Jon Elsby, welcomed 44 members of the Parish to the meeting.</p>	
2. OPENING PRAYER	
<p>Fr. Martin opened the meeting with a prayer.</p>	
3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
<p>Apologies received from Margaret Anderman, Celia Turner, Mary Jenner, Antonia Gabriel ,Jane Knowler</p>	
4. FINANCE REPORT	
<p>Greg O'Higgins, chair of the finance committee introduced himself and reported that the Parish has managed to maintain a surplus position due to a marginal increase in giving of 3% and a reduction in expenses of 5%. However he counselled against feelings of exuberance as pointed out that it was important to be in surplus and have a contingency fund to meet any unexpected expenses and capital projects. He reminded any new members who are tax payers to sign up for gift aid. He expressed his thanks to many members of the Parish who generously give of their time with regard to financial matters, including Mandy Dunn who had recently stepped down and Blaise Cardozo who had stepped in and had been extremely helpful. He also expressed thanks to the Parish secretaries, Chrissie Sturgess and Toni Buckley for the help with the PFC and Simon Dunn and Nick Bagshawe for continuing to provide invaluable counsel and guardianship.</p>	
5 REVIEW OF THE PARISH REPORT 2014- including Development Plans	
<p>Jon Elsby thanked all members of the PPC and PFC and all those in the Parish who provide invaluable help in various ways. He particularly thanked Peggy Purslow for all the articles written over the year for the A&B News which together with a report on Rotherfield provided by Daphne Bagshawe made up the Parish Report which had been circulated prior to the meeting together with a report on the activities of the school provided by Hilary Blake, headmistress.</p> <p>A letter had also been circulated to parishioners regarding the school site development plans. Jon Elsby advised the meeting that a large proportion of the PPC's work over the previous year had involved discussion of these proposals. He invited Hilary Blake to speak of the plans from the viewpoint of the school.</p> <p>Hilary Blake gave a very detailed account of events that had occurred through the year, emphasizing the vital importance of meeting requirements for safeguarding particularly with regard to access to the graveyard, in addition to the need for improving parking both for parishioners and parents dropping off and collecting children, and for improving the school buildings and site which was essential for the continued success of the school. She admitted that the school had originally failed to follow protocol in arranging for an architect to draw up a number of the proposals and said that she understood how upsetting it was to learn that the architect found that the presbytery was in the wrong place and the plans indicated that it would need to be moved elsewhere. She acknowledged that meetings between school</p>	

and PPC had become increasingly difficult, leading to eventual intervention by both Father Hardaker and the Bishop to try and facilitate progress. Whilst accepting previous mistakes had been made she expressed the hope that there could be a fresh start and had been disappointed that the recent letter from the PPC had not conveyed, in her view, the Bishop's recommendations in the spirit in which they had been meant.

Jon Elsby gave a brief response indicating that there were three stakeholders involved: the Parish, the School and the Presbytery -being the home of the Priest-and that no decisions should be made in the interest of any one of these that would be detrimental to the rest. He pointed out that the Parish was expanding, with numbers attending Mass doubling over the last three years and the needs of the Parish must be considered in addition to those of the school.

Daphne Bagshawe briefly addressed the meeting and said she wished to correct any impression that may have been given that the PPC had been intransigent. She pointed out that the PPC had offered to work jointly with the school to request planning proposals and fund these jointly. She alleged that it had never been in dispute that the school needs improving but this requirement needs to be balanced with careful planning for the needs of the whole Parish. She thanked the PPC for their courageous and methodical handling of a very difficult situation, and felt they now needed to know the views of the parish as a whole.

Several parishioners raised a few questions regarding how the absolute requirements for safeguarding might be met without recourse to such drastic plans involving resiting the presbytery and whether alternative access to the graveyard could be found.. It was also pointed out that school and parish should work together and move forward in an atmosphere of love and concern for each other.

Jon Elsby concluded by inviting parishioners to contact him with any views either personally, or by email: jon.elsby@gmail.com

Due to the length of the meeting it was also decided that a further Parish Meeting should be held very soon in order for parishioners to reflect on the plans and be able to have further discussion.

6. CLOSING PRAYER

Father Martin closed the meeting with a prayer.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was decided to hold a further Parish General Meeting in three weeks, Sunday 13 December, 12:00 hours