



APW
25/03/2025

The Parish of Medstead and Four Marks
Minutes of an Extra-PCC Meeting
Tuesday 25th February, 7.30pm
At COGS Church Hall

Present: Howard Wright (Chair), David Duffin, Jeremy Griggs, Timothy James, Jackie Jurd, John Lofthouse, Frank Maloney, Pam Maloney, Ian Trotter, Andrew Walters, Jill Williams, David Williams (Secretary)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Howard welcomed everyone to an Extra PM&FM PCC meeting of 2025, convened specially to consider and, if possible, to accept the Budget proposed by the Team appointed for that purpose.

Apologies were received from Debby Barnes and Bob Meekums.

2. Worship and Prayer

Howard reported three matters for thanksgiving:

- Alpha had started on Monday 24th. Two had been booked but five arrived – four men and a lady. Howard asked urgently for a woman to join the team to help him run the course.
- The January income figure at £28,000 greatly surpassed the £17,000 on the proposed budget for 2025. Nearly all the extra is down to a very generous one-off gift, not a regular monthly input. Still cause for thanksgiving.
- Chris Nunn, a regular at COGS service, is willing to become Parish Treasurer. He was meeting Tori, our bookkeeper at the same time as this meeting.

With this news in mind, Howard led worship and thanks as we sang “In Christ Alone” and “Worthy of every song (Build my life)”. Several members led the meeting in prayer.

3. Finance

a. (Hopefully) Appoint treasurer – name and details to follow before meeting.

- i. This was reported as preface to Worship.
- ii. Further expressions of thanks were made:
 1. To PCC for attending the extra meetings. We hope to set the budget and move on to a pattern of regular bi-monthly meetings concerning governance, ministry, mission.
 2. To the ‘Team of Three’ - Frank Maloney, Jeremy Griggs and Richard Gillard, and also Tori who we recognise as going far beyond her agreed contract to help us make progress and fulfil our duties as Trustees. PCC recorded a **formal vote of thanks** to Tori, and Andy suggested we mark our appreciation with flowers.
 3. To Chris Nunn for accepting the job of Treasurer. Howard had circulated notes about Chris’s extensive experience before the meeting. He and Andy gave some background to Chris’s offer. **Howard proposed that Chris Nunn be appointed to the post of Honorary Treasurer. Andy Walters seconded the proposal. PCC agreed unanimously.**

b. Agree the proposed Budget

i. Background and context

(Note: instruction from the Diocese was that parties to a proposed merger should plan without reference to each other – “No Done Deal”.)

At the beginning of 2024 COGS (separately) had planned a deficit budget to allow an undesignated surplus built up over previous years to be brought down to be more in line with their reserves policy. This was practice in COGS year by year for many years, and because there has always been an expectation that God will provide. For 23 of the past 25 years COGS accounts have shown a year-end surplus.

Final deficit for 2024 was £9009.

Howard contended that a parish should not have money sitting in the bank doing nothing while parishioners were being asked to give sacrificially.

There were sufficient undesignated funds available to cover that deficit over and above those also held notionally as reserves.

ii. Basis of the proposed budget

The budget represented in document

PM & FM - January 2025 [Budget 2025].xlsx

had been drawn up guided by the figures found in the documents

PM & FM - December 2024 [PCC Report Dec 24].xlsx, and

PM & FM - December 2024 [Budget 2024].xlsx

The latter two worksheets only contained data from April 1st 2024, the date of the merger of the two parishes. Therefore, they had been ‘annualised’, i.e. multiplied by 12/9 to give a best available indication of figures for a full year.

Howard noted that in 2024, remarkably, expenditure at just below £213k was actually £424 below the 2024 budgeted figure.

The budgeted income at £201k is cautiously low. The budgeted expenditure at £239k is cautiously high.

iii. Detailed observations

1. Employment Allowance – budgeted zero in 2025. The allowance was designed to support salaries in small businesses and other organisations. It may be discontinued in April 2025, but Frank believes that it will after all continue. Tori to be asked to check if will continue to be available. Worth about £5000 if it continues.
2. Andy reported that COGS has a leakage problem with the roof. One quote so far comes in at £14 for repairing flat roof, or £20k if we also upgraded insulation. Howard asked if there might be designated or even undesignated funds that could cover this.
3. Figures for St Andrews utilities in the 2025 budget were approximate, based on 2024 values as actual figures were not yet available.
4. Jeremy and Jackie informed PCC of the origin of CCLA funds from sale of land adjacent to St Andrew’s. Howard emphasised that the £67k should be protected by designation and not just put into General funds.
5. Reflecting on the variation from month to month of giving:

- a. November 2024 showed response from COGS congregation to the appeal when it looked as though we were heading for a £54k deficit.
 - b. January 2025 saw a generous donation of £10,625 which we understand is a one-off. So the projected 2025 deficit is also significantly reduced; alternatively it could be considered to cover the remaining deficit for 2024.
6. Timothy expressed concern about the structure of giving – how dependent is it on the whole congregation, or perhaps just a few generous individuals? Howard and others reminded the meeting of the general experience (rule?) that 80% of work is done by 20% of the people; 80% of resources are provided by 20% of donors. We hope that when our new Treasurer is in place we may before long get some analysis of that distribution. Jackie cautioned us to remember Jesus' observation about the widow who put in her two small copper coins.
 7. It was clear that members of PCC had different views of what the document presented as a 'Budget' actually represented. For some it is the Financial Plan, for others it contains figures for guidance for monitoring actual income and expenditure through the period covered.
- iv. Because of the different understandings of what constitutes a Budget and a Financial Plan, voting on this set of reports was postponed until after consideration of the next document.

c. **Agree the financial plan.**

- i. Howard referred to the document *DRAFT 2025 Finance Plan v1.docx* (a slightly updated v2 is appended) In view of the discussion of what constitutes a Budget and what makes a Finance Plan, Howard suggested that we consider this document as an action plan for managing finances in response to the figures in the 2025 Budget.
The document had been drawn up in response to the preliminary figures presented to the October meeting which predicted a 2024 deficit of £54,000. By the end of the year thanks to generous donors the deficit was around £9,000. Some of that extra giving related to anticipated outlay for projects such as the COGS solar panels.
- ii. To action **Proposal 1**, we will need some forensic accounting to determine which amounts in our overall funds are designated. For example, CCLA funds brought in should only be used for the special purposes such as reordering the front end of St Andrew's seating. Similarly, the money brought back from the Diocese deposit should be used for COGS expenditure, such as the needed repairs to the leaking roof. Over time those historic funds will be exhausted, and the PCC and Treasurer will manage new income for the needs of the whole Parish. Some of that may well need in turn to be designated for specific purposes. Reserves would also need to be maintained from 'free' money according to a new Reserves policy still to be agreed.
- iii. There are three proposals grouped together about Fund Raising:
 - **Proposal 2** – thanks to be conveyed to the congregations for the support particularly in the last two months when we finished the year with a deficit

of less than £10k compared with an anticipated £54k in October. What was achieved in 2024 and what we hope for in 2025. Encouragement to continue support to save running our reserves out.

- **Proposal 3** – Inviting attendees at Family-oriented events to consider supporting them, including financially.
 - **Proposal 4** – Looking to hold social and missional activities, particularly across the Parish.
- iv. Two proposals about recognising if and when emergency measures are required. PCC felt the original dates in the document left these too late in the year, as it was strongly recommended that we should be able to set a budget for 2026 by the November meeting. First review in May with first quarter (actually four months) figures. Further review in July with half-year figures to gauge the need for emergency measures.
- v. We debated whether to take proposals individually or *en bloc*. Because Proposal 1 underpins all the others, it was decided to vote them together. Howard proposed that the Finance Plan be accepted; Timothy seconded. The document was **accepted, with one abstention and no objection**.

d. Voting on the Proposed Budget

One member strongly felt that we should not accept a proposed budget that included such a large, planned deficit. Another was concerned that the rate at which the overall surplus in total finance had accumulated was small and spread over many years, while the proposed Budget would see a rapid depletion of those funds.

Howard summarised the situation. He advised that we accept the Budget as providing a best available forecast of income and setting boundaries for the various 'lines' of expenditure which should not be exceeded without permission of PCC. He noted that if by mid-year there were financial difficulties, our first recourse would be to open discussion with the Diocese over CMF.

He also expressed the regret of many that we had not been able to develop the wider parish vision and strategies first touched on at our Day-Away in May 2024.

Howard proposed that “We work with these figures as in the column 2025 Budget” (in document *PM & FM - January 2025.xlsx*). **Pam seconded the proposal**. There was **one Abstention** and **one Objection**. All other members supported the proposal.

e. Opening a new Parish-wide bank account

- i. Unfortunately, there had been further delay to the opening of the new joint account. We do not want the bank simply move funds from the historic separate accounts for St Andrew's and COGS into the new account – to do so would mean all donors using Standing Orders would have to set up new arrangements, with the likelihood that possibly some months of income could be missed. We want to keep old current accounts until all new SOs have been arranged. We are also ensuring that names of Trustees on the Charity Commission records are consistent with those we report to the Bank.

Frank was thanked for, yet again, attempting the process of opening the new Parish-wide bank account without (yet) closing the old accounts.

4. Required items

- a. Safeguarding – nothing to report
- b. GDPR – nothing to report
- c. Health and Safety
Frank briefly spoke to his report:
25.02.22 Health & Safety Rpt.docx
No further action was required.

5. Date of Next Meeting

PCC: Tuesday 18th March 2025, at COGS Church Hall – preceded by meal at 6.30pm.

Howard closed the meeting with prayer at 10:09pm