**CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART & St JOHN THE EVANGELIST.**
**LONDON ROAD, BUSHEY. WD23 1BA**

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL HELD ON SUNDAY 26th October 2025.**

**Present**

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| Simon Blackburn (Chairman) | James Moran |
| Marion Gosling | Richard Jennings |
| Jeremy Turner | Alain Elias (Chair Finance Committee) |
| Jane Buckley | Fr. Jim McNicholas (Parish Priest) |
| Anne Canavan | Marshal D'Souza |
| Pat Pinot | Tony Breslin |
| David Furber | Chioma Agbugba |
| Itunu Dudu | Sarah Fitzpatrick |
| Christina Reffold (Clerk) | Paddy Gosling |

**APOLOGIES** : Anne-Marie Tiernan, Linda Hartley

**The Chairman opened and closed the meeting with a prayer**

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**
   - i. **Gift Aid**
     Responsibility for Gift Aid has now been transferred to the Parish Administrator, following diocesan direction. This function was previously under the remit of the Finance Committee.
   - ii. **Church Opening During the Week**
     The possibility of opening the church during weekdays was discussed. This would require the presence of volunteers for security purposes. As no volunteers have yet come forward, the matter will be revisited at a later date if necessary. Parishioners wishing to enter the church during the week may do so via the sacristy.

2. **Report from the Chairman of the Finance Committee (Alain Ellias)**
   - i. **Committee Membership**
     New members have been appointed since the previous meeting. The Chair expressed gratitude to all volunteers and members of the parish management team. Thanks were recorded to Bernadette for her dedicated service to the Committee upon her stepping down.
   - ii. **GDPR Management**
     Itunu Dudu will assume responsibility for GDPR compliance. Volunteers willing to assist in this area are invited to come forward.
   - iii. **Audit**
     The Parish had an audit since the last meeting with the previous one being over 5 years ago. Overall feedback was positive however there were some opportunities for development largely around the handling of cash.
     The Chairman of the Finance Committee recognised the significant work that the bookkeeper, Maria Butler, has achieved which has resulted in an overall score on the accounting records of 93% and 100% accuracy on the Annual Finance submission. The Board recorded their thanks to Maria.
   - iv. **Financial Overview**
     As of mid-October, the parish recorded a surplus of £900. Significant expenditure included:
     - Church and Sacristy refurbishment – £34,000
     - Replacement curtains – £7,000
     - Year to date figures for income stand at £177,500 and for expenditure at £176,500. The Chair expressed confidence in the parish's financial position.

Thanks were given to all the Committee members for their support and advice.

v. **Standing Orders and Contactless payments**
There remains potential to increase the number of parishioners contributing via standing orders. Assistance in promoting this initiative is welcomed.

vi. **Gift Aid**
A recent claim resulted in a return of £15,000. It was noted that this figure could be increased by decreasing the amount of loose plate offerings and increasing standing orders or contactless donations. At present only around 40% of donations are Gift Aided. The Diocese is in the process of procuring new and additional card machines to improve reliability.

vii. **Parish Social Events**
Social activities play a valuable role in parish life. The Chair encouraged parishioners to bring forward ideas for future events, noting that many successful initiatives have originated from parish members.

viii. **Appreciation of Volunteers**

ix. Thanks were expressed to Richard, Simon, and other trades volunteers for their contributions to maintenance and repair works and new volunteers continue to be a welcome source of support.

3. **Fabric Report (Richard Jennings)**

i. A number of ongoing projects remain largely unchanged since the meeting of 25th May.

ii. **Neighbour's Wall**

iii. There is an ongoing issue concerning a boundary wall shared with a neighbouring property, which is delaying progress on several planned works. The parish is liaising with the Diocese to resolve this matter. The affected projects include the resurfacing of the car park and the relining of parking bays. Due to the need for heavy vehicles to access the site during these works, it was agreed that the wall repairs must be completed first, followed by drainage works and, subsequently, the resurfacing.

iv. **Car Park Works**
Plans remain in place to undertake resurfacing during the summer holiday period next year, subject to resolution of the wall issue. Coordination with hall users will be arranged.

v. **Memorial Garden**
A working party has been established to review and improve the memorial garden in accordance with diocesan policy and long-term sustainability. Planned works include refurbishment of the water feature, upgrading of garden lighting, and general landscaping.

vi. **Temporary Repairs**
The committee discussed the possibility of patch repairs to the main car park but agreed that a full resurfacing, once the wall issue is resolved, would be more cost-effective.

4. **Health & Safety (James Moran)**

i. A fire safety audit was completed earlier in the year, with a few outstanding actions relating to building protection.

ii. The committee agreed that full-scale fire drills are not required due to the building's multiple exits.

iii. Attention was drawn to recent fire incidents within the Diocese linked to improper disposal of hot ashes, incense, and candles. These materials must be placed in suitable containers.

iv. Fire extinguishers are in place, and a small team of trained fire wardens ensures adequate coverage at all Masses. Safety reminders will be published in the parish newsletter.

v. Parishioners are reminded to take extra care on footpaths during darker evenings.

5. **Memorial Garden ornaments (Fr Jim)**

i. Concerns were raised regarding the untidy appearance of the memorial garden due to unapproved ornaments and plaques being placed there.

ii. The working party will make recommendations on how best to address this sensitively, potentially involving written requests to families to remove items.
iii. Updated guidance will be reintroduced for inclusion in funeral arrangements to ensure consistency going forward.

6. **Any Other Business**
   i. The Council discussed revitalising the parish's social life, which had declined following the COVID-19 pandemic. Past activities, such as a Christmas meal, and regular weekly or monthly lunches for older parishioners, were noted as valuable community events.
   A Social Committee has been proposed to coordinate such activities. Volunteers currently include Marshall D'Souza, Sarah Fitzpatrick, Christina Reffold, and Marion Gosling. Further parishioner involvement is encouraged.
   ii. The Attendees thanked all those who volunteer in the Church in a range of different roles for the significant and valuable contributions and service to the parish.

7. **Date and time of Next Meeting**
   *11:45am on 22nd Feb or 1st March – TBC dependent on Half Term.*

8. **Closing Prayer.**

**Meeting Ended: 12:40pm**