**Minutes of the Bede Partnership Finance Group – 15 October 2019**

***Present:***

Patricia Alexander (Chair: St Oswald’s); Gerard Leake (St Aloysius & St James); Roy Smith (St Bede’s, Jarrow); Nick Duffy (St Gregory’s); Brian Stenhouse (St Mary’s); Una Fennelly (St Peter & St Paul); David Smith (Sacred Heart); Catherine Elliott (St Bede’s, South Shields); Margaret Tuck (St Matthew’s); Dave Laws (minute taker: St Joseph’s):

***Apologies:***

Michael Finlay (St Mary’s) and Michael Dickson (St Gregory’s)

The meeting was opened with a Gospel passage read by Catherine Elliott.

***Minutes of meeting 16 July 2019***

The minutes of the meeting (July 2019) were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

***Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 16 July 2019***

Roy Smith confirmed that the energy supplier for ST Bede’s Jarrow, is Total Gas and Energy Ltd.

The action point requesting information on past applications for grants should only require that future applications be shared with the PFG for information. This was agreed.

**Action: All parishes to share future grant applications with PFG**

***Action points arising from the previous meeting.***

The action points arising from the meeting – 16 July 2019 are covered by agenda items in this meeting.

Music License

Following Nick Duffy’s chat with Gillian Cormack, Michael Dickson spoke with Jeff Ledger (Diocesan accountant) regarding music licenses and he advised that the Diocese is following up the issue. On 4th October 2019 the Diocese sent an email to each Parish Priest requesting the following information:

So that we can consider this matter we will be grateful if you will let Andrea Emson in the Finance Team know, by 25 October 2019:

* whether you currently have a Calamus licence
* if you do, when that licence expires
* if you don’t currently have a Calamus licence, whether you think you should have one or will need one in the near future

For further information, the following email explanation, on increased costs, was received by Michael Dickson, from One License:

“One License's price structure can be seen here: <https://onelicense.net/options-and-prices>
I know it feels like you have been charged more for your licence, however it's not that One License has increased the cost but that Calamus was under-priced.
The reality with Calamus (and you might have dealt with me, Nicholas Blackford, at Calamus) was that it could only afford to employ one member of staff. If we'd increased the number to two then the licence would have nearly doubled. Similarly, if Calamus had developed the on-line features available from One License then that too would have increased the licence fee.
I know that it's difficult to see anything other than the price increase but it would have happened under Calamus as everyone moves into the digital age with on-line accessibility being an integral, essential part of any company.
One License does offer a lot more than Calamus ever did - thousands of songs from hundreds of companies, downloadable content, on-line reporting and searchable databases, all things that customers were asking for and which Calamus couldn't have provided without a substantial price increase.”

**Action: Patricia to contact Diocese to check on the timescale for this proposal as some licences expire on 31st December 2019**

***Feedback from Partnership Development Group Meetings***

The draft action plan, produced and forwarded to the Diocese, has not yet been approved by the Diocese.

At their meeting, the Partnership Group decided that parishes, in normal circumstances, will only be asked to contribute to the Partnership account once each year. There may be times when emergency funding is required but this should only be in exceptional circumstances. The PDG also agreed that each parish contribution, towards partnership spending, should use the same affordability method as last year. They are requesting £5,000 contribution for the current year. From the information submitted by each parish, Gerrard Leake has produced a spreadsheet showing the % and monetary contribution due from each parish.

**Action: David Smith to send a request for parish contributions to each parish finance chair. (Requests sent 25 October 2019)**

The PDG has produced a Partnership Newsletter. The first issue will be November 2019 and plans further issues on a six-monthly basis. This is to distributed on the weekend of 9th & 10th November. This will be funded from the Partnership account. Other costs still to be paid from the Partnership account include; a dinner for the Bishop and clergy following the Bishops partnership mass in September, future youth development and formation events planned for the year.

**Action: Catherine Elliott to feedback to the PDG details of this meeting**

***Review and discussion on the Bede Partnership consolidated financial return.***

No additional receipts or payments have been made since the last meeting. There remains a balance of £2598 in the Partnership account.

From the 2019-year individual Parish returns to the Diocese, David Smith produced a one-page consolidated financial statement for the Partnership and included the consolidated 2018 financial statement for comparison.

The group noted the following:

* Offertory receipts increased by 2.7% in 2019 to £285,217 (2018: £277,654)
* There are not many opportunities for cost savings
* There remains an opportunity to increase gift aid tax receipts by asking people in some parishes to make their contributions under gift aid rather than loose in the plate. If a parish receives a donation it should try and persuade the donor to allow it to be gift aided.
* Repairs and renewals increased to £135,249 compared to £109,683 in the prior year
* Other recurring expenses remained relatively static and it was noted that a prior year review of expenses did not highlight any significant opportunities for cost savings based on the current number of properties
* The actual consolidated surplus for the year was £2,322 (2018: £144,288 which included a number of one-off items not repeated in 2019). After adjusting for one off items it was broadly estimated that the surplus in 2019 was £42k (2018: £37k)
* Should be more proactive in looking at how we can do more to further God’s kingdom with the level of reserves across the partnership bank accounts, particularly in relation to Formation and Outreach

It was agreed that the Partnership consolidated finance statement could be shared with the PDG.

**The PFG thanked David Smith and Gerard Leake for their work in producing the consolidated partnership account and in calculating parish contributions.**

**Action: Patricia to provide copies to the PDG, David will email the file.**

 **Action: Catherine to feedback the views of the PFG on the amount held in reserve.**

***AOB***

A letter, dated 13 September 2019, has been received from the Diocese, inviting parishes to join an Inter-Diocesan Fuel Management Scheme, in order to potentially reduce the cost of energy bills.The PFG recommend that Parish Finance Committees consider this scheme as it could provide savings, due to IFM’s bulk buying of gas and electricity and the apparent saving of the 5% VAT. If any partnership parishes do take up the invitation to join the scheme it would be useful to receive their feedback. If the feedback is positive and more of our parishes join the scheme it may negate the need for us to align renewal dates and arrange our own consolidated contracts as envisaged at our 7 May 2019 meeting.

**Action: It was agreed to keep sharing information across the partnership on energy providers and when contracts are being renewed**

At the request of a parishioner at St. Gregory’s, as to whether we should distribute the annual Bede Partnership Financial Returns to parish finance committees once they had been finalised, it was agreed by the Finance Group that we should share this information with parish finance committees so they can see Partnership receipts and payments and year-end financial position

***Date and time of next meeting***

Patricia Alexander raised the issue of frequency of meetings now that the PFG was firmly established. After discussion it was agreed that the group should meet on a six monthly basis.

The next meeting will therefore be on Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 7pm at Saint Peter’s and St. Paul’s, Tyne Dock, South Shields.

Minutes approved by:

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P Alexander, Chair