



CHURCH HALL NEWSLETTER

No 1

November 2017

WELCOME

Welcome to the first of our occasional newsletters about the St Michael's Church Hall project. This newsletter is intended to complement other forms of communication that many of you are already engaged with. If you would like to go on the Church Hall email list please contact: churchhall@stmichaelbarnes.org. There is more about our upcoming community meeting at the end of this newsletter.

In This Issue

- Vision, Consultation Transparency and Communication
- Initial Conclusions
- Away Day
- Dialogue with Existing Users and Hirers
- Consultation Group
- Community Audit
- Upcoming Community Meeting

VISION, CONSULTATION, TRANSPARENCY and COMMUNICATION

Thank you all who came to our first Community Meeting back in the early summer. It was an important occasion to start an entirely new process, and we have particularly taken on board and worked with the principles of vision, consultation, communication and transparency emphasised at that meeting. Since then we have sought to regularly communicate via email, printed material, website news, and the sharing of documents so that everyone can remain informed and able to participate in the way that they wish.

INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

Since the Meeting we have been gathering a broad spectrum of information needed to move forward just a few steps. The PCC recently reflected together on this, and we came to some initial conclusions:

- *That the project will encompass the stated needs of all our existing users and hirers, notably St Michael's Nursery, alongside any additional uses.*
- *That our understanding is that a new building will best meet those needs, and will be less disruptive, faster to achieve, and result in a higher-quality and longer-term outcome.*
- *That the project should reflect a Christian commitment to the less-advantaged and social need in the context of our parish and local area, and within the framework of financial viability.*

With these conclusions as a basis, we then moved on to consider what our ‘lead options’ were for further exploration, elaboration and consultation in the near future. These are:

- 1. A new multi-purpose Church Hall (designed to meet the needs of existing users as well as new potential users) financed by fundraising, borrowing and grants.*
- 2. A new multi-purpose Church Hall (designed to meet the needs of existing users as well as new potential users) financed by fundraising, borrowing, grants and 1 or 2 flats.*

With regard to 2. we wish to affirm that we have heard the concerns about the house in the previous project, and the desire for the appearance of a community building from the street. Such flats might initially be part of financing, but in the fullness of time could be utilised for staff such as a children’s worker or pastoral assistant to support the needs of the community and parish. These are initial ideas that will be developed further, and we will be widely consulting once more specific plans have been drawn up. Then perhaps it will be easier to see more clearly how stated needs are being met, and any concerns may be alleviated.

It might be useful to say something about how we came to these conclusions.

AWAY DAY

Back in September we held our Away Day, when the PCC spent time together reflecting on the vision that might inspire our new project, and relating this to core values such as our Mission Action Plan and Guiding Principles. We were joined by a range of representatives from the congregation, church hall users and neighbours, as we shared and discussed information coming out of a number of task groups looking into areas as diverse as fundraising options, social needs and church hall projects elsewhere. This enabled us to have a broad overview and ‘palette’ of information. It was a good day of collaboration and consensus building, without ignoring concerns and difficulties. The two stand-out reflections on the day from all gathered was that the project had the exciting potential to bring the whole community together in a positive way, and an awareness that a new building was likely to be the best response to varied local needs and the issues represented by the current building and its facilities. A full report of the day has been shared on the website and is still available.

DIALOGUE WITH EXISTING USERS and HIRERS

We have also been in frequent dialogue with all our Church Hall users, particularly our long term hirers such as St Michael’s Nursery School and the Ballet School. They have shared with us their specific requirements, and are supportive of a project that includes these requirements. We have listed and noted these and continue to work closely with all our hirers and users and thank them for their engagement and participation in the process.

CONSULTATION GROUP

I am grateful also to the Rev'd Elisabeth Morse who chaired the first meeting of our consultation focus group which is made up of representatives from neighbours, hall users, PCC and congregation. The aim of the group is to help the PCC to reflect on the process as it moves forward, raise any concerns, and consider how to resolve any issues or questions as they arise. The PCC look forward to facilitating the work of this group as we develop a project that meets the complex and diverse interests of church and parish.

COMMUNITY AUDIT

Thank you also to all of you who filled out the Community Audit which was the first stage of ongoing community consultation. This is a very important piece of the 'jigsaw puzzle' of broad information that was needed to form a coherent picture and vision. We are committed to listening to the views of the whole community and incorporating these into the project accordingly - charts based on the results of the audit can be found on the website. There was great breadth in the responses, but nevertheless some particular themes emerged, and we noted down three in particular for special consideration:

- *Large support for children's events and activities, including the Nursery and Ballet School, but also other needs related to wellbeing, groups and engagement of children and young people.*
- *A deep concern for the care, support and health of the elderly.*
- *An awareness of personal and pastoral issues faced by people in our parish, often of a counselling or therapeutic nature.*

We also observed that both a large and small spaces are desirable, and the need for flexibility of space.

We are grateful to those of you who clearly gave quite some thought to your answers, and some original and inspiring ideas. As the project moves forward, we will keep returning to those ideas, particularly those relating to the above themes, to see how they might be incorporated and encouraged whether through church initiatives or inviting local groups to meet those needs.

UPCOMING COMMUNITY MEETING

Our next Community Meeting is Monday 27th November at 8pm in the Church Hall. Once again, I hope that many of you will be there, whether worshippers at St Michael's, residents of the parish, wider community, or users of the Church Hall. The aim of the meeting is to:

- *Update everyone on the process so far and feedback to the community on the outcomes of the audit and the Away Day.*
- *To share some conclusions and lead ideas for project development.*
- *To describe the next stages of the process.*

I am pleased to say that Ruth Martin, the Diocesan Secretary will chair the meeting. Ruth is the lead administrative officer within the diocese who ensures excellence in all areas of process. At the end of the meeting we hope to begin gathering and harnessing your talents and enthusiasms for the project as we go forward.

FINALLY – THANK YOU

Thank you for your patience and your views. We outlined a timeline at the start of the new process and have managed to keep to it, but recognise that these things still take time which can be unsettling. Nevertheless, I felt it was very important for us to go back to basics and first principles, to make sure everything is soundly based on our Christian faith and thoroughly thought through from start to finish and top to bottom. This way we are able to articulate a project with a strong sense of vision, based on consultation, transparent, and communicated to all. My desire was to avoid making any assumptions or rushing to conclusions without your input and opportunity for prayer.

I would like to apologise to those who were unhappy or displeased by the previous process. This was never our intention, but the PCC recognises these feelings, and some of the things that have contributed to it. I am encouraged by the positive comments I have received from many who feel that they are now being kept informed and engaged. Even though there is still much diversity of opinion, we are at least able to understand the reasoning behind different points of views and respect this variety.

I passionately believe that our church and parish deserves the best we can offer in the service of God and his people. How do we know what is best? This is difficult question, but I was struck by a reflection I read recently: creating a vision is not about choosing our likes and dislikes but working out what God is doing in this place; not thinking up our own ideas but discovering God's ideas for us. Prayer and contemplation are therefore at the heart of this and all processes of renewal, and I commend this project to your prayers that we may speak the Gospel afresh in our own time and to generations yet unborn.

Father Stephen Stavrou

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S J. Stavrou". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.