

St Werburgh's Parish Council Meeting

Thurs 26th February 2026 at 7.15pm

Minutes

Present: Fr David, Lal Cook, Tina Bainbridge, Stephen Tierney, Pat Floate, Marian McCarthy (chair), Bernice Meredith

Welcome and opening prayer: Marian welcomed everyone; Fr David led us in prayer.

Minutes of last meeting and actions: Minutes from last meeting were accepted.

All ACTIONS completed!

Review of St Werburgh week

Fr David gave a summary of the week dedicated to St Werburgh, which was a whirlwind but mainly positive! There were lots of people involved (various times and places, so as to make it as inclusive as possible) and it was good to have some Chester dignitaries (the Lord Mayor, for example) and representatives from other churches in the area, as well as priests who had worked in the parish, and a son of the parish, Deacon Owen Gresty, present at the celebratory Mass.

Monday: The pilgrimage to the cathedral, to the shrine of St Werburgh was well attended and Bernice gave a short talk about the history of the shrine, followed by the rosary for the parish's intentions.

Tuesday: The Feast Day Mass was intended to feel like a normal Sunday Mass and Fr David felt that it was about right. There were estimated over 200 people attended.

Wednesday: focused on Welcome Wednesday and a party atmosphere was complimented by a glass of 'fizz' all round!

Thursday: 'Mysteries of Faith' evening of music, poetry and song. Fr David commented that perhaps it was a little too long but overall, it was a lovely occasion, with about 150+ people attending. It included a poem sent in by and read for the Rt. Hon. Samantha Dixon, MP for Chester North, who was unable to attend in person. The refreshments after the event were a huge success and it was nearly 11pm before everyone had gone home!

Friday: Social at St Werburgh's Club. A huge success with karaoke driving the evening! John (Club Manager) wants it to happen again.

Note that this successful evening led into discussion about the scope for using The Club more for various parish events. Also, suggestions of Chez Jules Film Night, a meal at The Forge, or Pickles in Handbridge.....

Summer trip offer

David Quayle has outlined a plan for a summer trip which he would organise – coach, destination as agreed, and he would offer his driving services on a voluntary basis; the coach hire would be cost of coach only.

This offer was enthusiastically considered, with various destinations discussed; accessibility of any destination needs to be taken into account.

Pat agreed that she would pick up the idea and work with both David and Welcome Wednesday volunteers to take the idea forward, and then report back to Fr David in due course.

ACTION: Pat

Plans for possible parish meeting

Pat raised the matter of an open meeting for the parish, which Fr David had indicated a while ago that he wanted to organise. Fr David said that his thinking is to hold such a meeting for the parish in October next, one year on from his arrival at St Werburgh's. This meeting would be used to offer people the opportunity to say what they see as the next steps forward in developing the St Werburgh's Parish mission.

Moving forward with the Parish Council

Fr David opened this discussion by stating clearly his immense gratitude for the way in which there had been thorough preparation for the transition from Fr Paul's guardianship of the parish to the arrival and first months of Fr David as parish priest. Fr David acknowledged that change is never easy, however, he is grateful, too, for all the conversations he has had so far, broadly across the parish membership, and listening-mode keeps going.

Fr David picked out, in particular, the Hospice Fund Raising project as not only a major achievement but also a very positive illustration of how many, many people coming together can achieve great things, in harmony and charity.

We then moved on to talk about how the current PC had come into being, namely as a follow-on to the achievements of the renewal programme that set the parish moving forward again after Covid. The PC comprised some members who had picked up specific area of responsibility, thus providing continuity, and several members who were voted onto the PC by the whole parish community.

Fr David was clear that he feels the next step is to bring out and emphasise the centrality of Christ in the whole mission of the parish (something he felt was perhaps not explicitly obvious is the renewal 'documentation', especially in the visuals in the organigram, though several present contested that Christ was at the centre of all the work done).

Marian made the point that the Renewal Steering Group – RSG – effectively completed its job when the newly formed Parish Council was set up and we should now ensure that the term 'RSG' is not used any more.

In terms of 'where next' for the Parish Council, Fr David said that his approach is 'See, Judge, Act'. We need to step back to look at the bigger picture. He outlined a timeframe as follows:

- Now until Pentecost: PC members to think and reflect on ideas for the next stage. There could be a PC meeting around Pentecost if there are relevant issues to discuss.
- Pentecost through to October: broaden the thoughts and possibilities out to the Parish, by inviting parishioners to offer suggestions, ask questions etc., in writing. We will have to pursue the best way to collate and synthesise these.
- October: The possibility of an Open Parish Meeting

At the end of this fruitful discussion about the way forward, three current members Lal Cook, Bernice Meredith and Marian McCarthy, all said that they felt it was time to step down from the PC, having done several years' work on the renewal and Parish Council. It is to be noted, also, that in January, Lyn Williams had already informed the parish priest of her own decision to withdraw. The other members all agreed to continue for the time being and until the work of the next six months come to fruition. At which point, Fr David will be in a better position to see what kind of organ/forum will be best suited to his needs as parish priest.

AOB:

- The question of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) still needs to be addressed (who is on the list etc.) and Fr David wants to recruit more EMHC, including people who can take the Eucharist to people in their homes. Fr David will work with Richard Lydon, who is currently looking after the EM rota, to organise a review meeting after Easter, for all existing EMs. Marian flagged that home visits will need Risk Assessment developing, something that is on the H&S team's radar already.

ACTION: Fr David

- Talks: Stephen T reported that the potential talk in May from Jeremy Black, based around Rerum Novarum, is still under discussion
- Former Day Chapel conversion work: a fruitful meeting between Diocesan Architect and Property Manager and Fr David and Marian took place today (26th Feb) and things do seem finally to be moving forward again. Potential start on work asap after Easter.

Tina closed the meeting with a prayer.

Next meetings: TBC

Marian McCarthy

28th February 2026