



Churches Together in Oxfordshire Enabling Group
Minutes of the Meeting held via ZOOM
on Tuesday, 15th February 2022

Those present: Jason St. John Nicolle (Chair, Church of England), David Hare (County Ecumenical Officer), Chris Robins (Treasurer), John Anderson (Secretary, Methodist), Steve Barber (Baptist).

Apologies: Nick St John (Roman Catholic), Glyn Millington (URC)

1. The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.
2. *Minutes of the last meeting.* Thanks offered to John for the Minutes which were received without amendment.
3. *Matters arising not covered in the agenda.* From our last meeting, item 5(a), the Secretary reported that he had not yet received a reply from the Assistant National Ecumenical Officer regarding the formulation of the Methodist Church Council under the new form of LEP constitution. He appreciated that this was a Methodist matter.
4. *Financial matters.* The Treasurer reported that the accounts for 2020/2021 as previously circulated had been agreed by the examiner. Another surplus has been made, even after the waive of the contributions by local Churches Together groups. This surplus would be eaten up by the reduction in contributions from supporting denominations as agreed at the last meeting. There was one outstanding contribution from one denomination but that was in hand.

There were no questions; Chris was again thanked for his work.

5. *Local Ecumenical Partnerships*

- (a) *Methodist survey* – the Secretary had circulated the results of the District wide survey of SCLEPs as it pertained to Oxfordshire. He highlighted the concerns over Faringdon United church and suggested that Glyn, David and he should consult over what support could be offered.

ACTION: SEC/CEO/GM

The survey had not included Ladygrove Church in Didcot as there was no Methodist involvement. Steve reported on a conversation that he had with Hugh Boorman, who was concerned over the future of the church as Anglican funding may be withdrawn. The Secretary suggested conversation with the Methodists in Didcot whose attempts to share their building with an independent church had fallen through. The Chair echoed the concerns over Ladygrove, asked what support we can offer Hugh, and wondered if Didcot could mirror the Bicester model over the mission to new housing.

ACTION: SB/SEC/CEO

- (b) *Christchurch, Thame* – the Secretary reported that attempts at mediation had failed and that a complaints process was being followed at national level. This was very sad and that he found it difficult to see a positive outcome from this situation.
- (c) *Church of the Holy Family, Blackbird Leys LEP/LECOS* – A meeting had taken place recently at which the revised formal proposal had been shared. It has been agreed that the Sharing Agreement required updating and re-approval; this action the Secretary believed was with the Diocesan Registrar. A small group had been created to look at on-going governance, a group which included the Secretary and Hilary Treavis, Ecumenical and International Coordinator from

the Baptist Union. This meeting had been planned for 10th March. The Chair re-iterated his concerns over the level of funding required and the process of reducing the overall costs. It was noted that the Salvation Army had been invited to the meeting for the first time, and that they were looking for a base in Oxford.

- (d) *Oxford Brookes Chaplaincy* – It was noted that the chaplaincy continued to operate ecumenically even though there was no formal agreement in place and the CTiO continued to be involved. The Church leaders group should be encouraged to formally disband the LEP, if that was deemed appropriate following the recommendations of the review.

ACTION: CHAIR/CEO

The Chair reported that the half-time Anglican chaplain post had been advertised without any reference to the ecumenical nature of the appointment.

6. *Arrangements for Annual General Meeting*

- (a) The next AGM to be held on 23rd March 2022. The keynote speaker is Rev. Canon Helen Cameron, chair of the Northampton Methodist District and moderator-elect of the Free Churches Group within CTE. It was agreed that we would explore the possibility of meeting at the Roman Catholic church in Bicester, with appropriate safeguards in place. Nick St John was to be asked by David if they would be able to host, and it was suggested that Steve might also invite other church leaders from Bicester to talk about their experiences in reaching out to new housing communities.

ACTION: SB/SEC/CEO

- (b) The Secretary wondered if a ‘hybrid’ meeting was possible, as this was becoming common practice for Methodist synods.

ACTION: SB/SEC/CEO

- (c) All the current officers were willing to stand for a further year.

- (d) The Secretary would gather together the papers for the meeting and make them available in the appropriate manner.

ACTION: SEC

7. *Web site, GDPR and updated contact lists.*

- (a) The Secretary reported that the web site was recording over 1000 unique visitors a month, and he had received two requests for vacancies to be added. He encouraged others to publicise it whenever possible and to offer material, as it was in danger of becoming biased towards Oxford, Abingdon and Methodism.

ACTION: ALL

- (b) The GDPR privacy policy and privacy notice documents had been circulated for a second time following comments from Chris. These were approved but required approval from the Church Leaders.

ACTION: CHAIR/CEO

- (c) The Secretary would now be able to write to all the contacts, asking for permission for us to hold their data. He would also include a question about how Churches Together groups were operating in the current climate.

ACTION: SEC

8. *Report from CTE training session on the new forms of SCLEP constitution* – this was a virtual seminar organised by CTE where the main speaker was Hilary Treavis from the Baptist Union. Although not the most entertaining of topics, the Secretary had found it useful. The seminar had been recorded and should be available on the CTE web site.

9. *Future direction for Churches Together in Oxfordshire* – It was agreed that we should offer invitations to the Enabling Group from other denominations, especially the Society of Friends, the Salvation Army and others who were affiliated to CTE.

ACTION: SEC/CEO

10. *Sharing of news* – none.

11. *Any other business* – none.

12. *Date of next meeting*:

(a) Tuesday, 5th April at 11.30am via ZOOM, a single agenda item meeting to follow on from January's meeting.

(b) Wednesday, 15th June, 12.30pm for lunch at a venue in Kidlington to be confirmed by the Chair.

13. David Hare closed the meeting by leading us in prayer.