

PETROCKSTOWE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Baxter Hall on
Tuesday 16th April 2023 at 6.30pm.

Councillors present: M Busby (Chair), F Lowe (Clerk)
29 Councillors & parishioners

1. **Apologies of absence.** None
2. **Chairman's Report.** The Chair welcomed all and read out a prepared report as below.

First of all I would like to record my welcome to Maggie Goaman on to the Parish Council and to Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin and Chris Wheatley as District Councillors.

It has been quite a busy year for the Council, with a number of planning applications that have required detailed responses from the council. To which the council has had some success, not least with the Laurels appeal.

The Council has been involved in a number of public meetings over the year;

- i Our MP Sir Geoffrey Cox held a drop in surgery in June which was well attended and many Parishioners were able to have a private meeting with Sir Geoffrey.
- ii On 19th January a meeting was held to discuss the closure of St Petroc's and possible future use. Our MP, representatives from the Parish Council, District Council, Community Church and the Diocese attended.
- iii An open meeting was held in March to discuss alternative uses for St Petroc. In attendance were the representatives of the Parish Council, District Council, MP, Community Church, Diocese and members of the public. I will report on this later.

We have a new sub-committee responsible for looking after the Recreation Ground and they are in the process of organising social events to raise money for the maintenance of the Rec. Big thanks for all their hard work.

I will also talk more about the Rec later.

Initials of Chair

As always I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their work and unstinting support over the year and of course our wonderful clerk Fiona. Also our County Councillor Andrew Saywell and Cheryl and Chris.

Someone posted on the village app a quote from a minister about church buildings being the beating heart of communities, he could not be more wrong. The heart of communities are people and here in Petrockstowe the kindness, friendship and the fact that villagers care shines through.

The Community Church and Baxter Hall are the two organs that help facilitate this. But make no mistake a building itself does not create a big heart; it is people. Of course we want to try and save our church building if that is possible and I will help the working group in any way I can.

A big thanks to all the villagers for making the village such a marvellous place to live.

3. Petrockstowe Recreation Ground

The Recreation Ground is a wonderful asset, 8 acres of safe open space for the use of the Parishioners of Petrockstowe.

The lease on the ground is owned by the PC; it is however becoming more expensive to maintain and equally more difficult to raise money through fund raising. The demand in the parish for funds for various causes is high.

I am proposing that the PC funds the basic costs of running the Rec, insurance, electricity, water, hedge cutting, fuel for the mower and mower servicing approximately £1600 per year.

This would enable the Petrockstowe Recreation Ground Social and Fundraising Committee (PRGSFC) to concentrate on raising funds for the upkeep of the buildings and to organise social events.

The percentage cost rise in PC share of the council tax would be quite large, however in real money it would only equate to a raise of less than £1 a month on band D properties and even less on band A. It is worth noting the percentage the Parish Council tax is of your total Council Tax Bill is only 1.35% and this would only increase to approximately 1.60%.

This would be affective next year – 2025

As the lease on the recreation ground is owned by the PC with 73 years to run, it is right and proper we take this action. Particularly there are now many younger children in the village.

I would welcome feedback from you.

Parishioners responded that, in the main, they would be happy to support the PC in this.

4. **St Petroc's Church.**

Over 60 villagers attended a meeting on the 23rd March at Baxter Hall to discuss alternative uses for St Petroc's.

Our MP, Sir Geoffrey Cox, facilitated the meeting and a number of suggestions were voiced and some submitted in writing.

Among them;

- Cycling/walking hub/hostel. Cafe, Repair Shop
- Sports and Craft facilities
- Sports venue, gym, skittles, climbing wall
- Sell off Baxter Hall and Methodist Church invest funds in St Petroc's
- Heritage centre with permanent exhibition of artefacts, incorporating small cafe. Preservation of Bell Tower and Organ.
- Demolition would cost £400 - £500K, have the Church factored in this scenario.

18 people have put their names forward to form a working group to develop a plan that is acceptable to the Diocese for alternative uses for the church.

Sir Geoffrey has offered to chair this group.

There is a deadline that the Diocese has set of June for a viable plan to be presented.

The first meeting with Sir Geoffrey will be on 26th April at 10.45am at the hall. However the group met on 9th April and Cheryl was elected Chairman of the group and Carol the Secretary.

I am going to ask Irene who attended the meeting to give us a feedback.

Irene shared that the estimated cost to make the building watertight was £400,000. Cheryl advised that the suggestion that came out on top was to

create a heritage/craft hub and using local skilled craftsmen, to hold workshops and use the fabric of the building (where possible) to teach others the skills to repair and maintain heritage buildings. The working group are hoping that the diocese will be supportive and that it will be possible to involve universities. Potential skills would include stained glass, lime building – using Mike Wye as the local supplier with Made Well and Peters Marland School possibly involved. It is hoped to make the building whole again while supporting the community. A list of the assets will be created including the very old, expensive Father Willis organ. Cheryl ask for parishioners to support this suggestion. The diocese have advised that if nothing is done by June then they could put the building on the market. It is known that there are lots of grants available that were not accessible when the building was being used as a church. The hope is that the skills learnt will then support other heritage buildings across the area. While it is possible that the diocese could lease the building, or sell it cheaply to the parish, the parish can't afford to take it on. It was asked if there were enough people with enough skills locally to support the suggestion. It was replied that if not, skilled craftsmen could travel and stay locally. Cheryl has enlisted the support of a person with experience in creating similar hubs.

It was confirmed that should the Methodist Chapel be sold that that proceeds would go to the Methodist Church UK.

With no further business, the Chair thanked all for attending and the meeting was closed at 6.50pm, and the bar was opened.

Chairman Date