

Minutes of the M meeting held at 7:30pm on Thursday 22nd July 2021

Present – Fr Nicholas (Fr N), Sr Dympna (Sr D), Liz Duggan (LD), Barbara Kay (BK), Katherine Smith (KS), Teresa Williams (TW), Jon Foster (JF), Marguerita Carroll (MC), Celia Robb (CR), Marion Mangan (MM1) and Michael Mangan (MM2) and Nigel Anstead (NA), [Taking Notes]

Apologies – Justin Bozzino (JB), Jenny Becker (JB) & Chris Brookes (CB)

1. Fr Nicholas started the meeting with an opening prayer. He then asked (JF) to Chair the meeting.

The meeting had already received the Guidance from the Diocese and a prepared document showing each agenda item.

2. Guidance from Diocese for Step 4 - COVID 19 and way forward.

(JF) Read the Guidance main principles to the meeting.

“Insurers expect all parishes within the Diocese to adopt the local Diocesan recommendations as a minimum as a condition of their ongoing insurance cover. This is also an important element of the legal duties placed on Diocesan Trustees as part of their Health and Safety obligations.

This guidance sets out a minimum level of mitigations which should apply across our Diocese and its parishes but clearly these may be enhanced where local risk assessments suggest that is appropriate.”

Also we must always consider the prevailing local conditions for the virus.

“Local parishes must maintain an awareness of the rates at which people are being vaccinated in the locality, the prevalence of new variants of the virus, the local rates of hospital admissions and any local public health advice. “

There was a discussion as to what locality means and it was agreed we should use Bedford as the locality rather than the area of church as a good number of parishioners do not live close to the parish.

The meeting then went through each item on the guidance document and agreed what should happen.

- a. **Hand sanitiser at entrances and exits** – Already doing this and will continue.
- b. **Face coverings to be the norm for those in church** - Face coverings in church to be encouraged by newsletter, Fr Nicholas and Latin Mass Priests to also encourage their congregations to wear face coverings.
- c. **General cleaning to a good standard, using commonly available cleaning fluids and detergents** – As deep cleans are not required now unless there is a COVID case it was agreed to revert back to the old cleaning timetable pre COVID.

d. Social Distancing and Capacity of Churches

There seemed to be two views at the meeting, which were:

- 1) We should open up the church to full capacity with no social distancing.
- 2) We should remain as we are for the time being because the country is being urged to be cautious at the moment also the Diocese guidance states “ Social Distancing and Capacity of Churches social distancing is an important feature of public confidence and should be encouraged”

An additional 6 pm Mass on Sunday was discussed if there is sufficient demand for this for those who would like a Sunday Mass but feel 10.30 am Mass is too busy.

After some discussion it was agreed to stay as we are for 4 weeks and review the situation again.

- e. **Congregational Singing - face coverings should be used where there is any congregational singing & phase singing in gently with shorter pieces [Alleluia, Sanctus. Memorial Acclamation, Amen, Agnus Dei] rather than longer pieces [Gloria, Creed, hymns/songs].** This was agreed. It was asked if we could use the hymn books again? After asking for guidance from the diocese, not at this time.
- f. **Holy Water stoups must not be filled. Holy Water can be made available either via individual bottles already filled and blessed [bottles easily available eg ampulla.co.uk] in a closed container which has a tap for people to fill their bottles. Open containers may not be used.** - Agreed that the parish Holy water barrel with tap be replaced in the church.
- g. **Test, Track and Trace - To be observed as long as it is in operation. From Monday 19 July 2021, designated venues are no longer legally required to ask customers, visitors and staff to “check in” (attendees can scan the NHS QR code poster via the NHS COVID-19 app or provide their contact details). Although it isn’t a requirement, you are strongly encouraged to retain your NHS QR code poster and maintain your “logbook” containing attendees’ contact details.** - Agreed to continue as we are as encouraged by the government to do so.
- h. **Booking systems should continue wherever there is a concern that risk assessed capacity levels may be exceeded – Only Latin Mass at 8:30am Sunday has booking system.**
- i. **Movement of people current systems that help avoid close contact such as one way systems should be encouraged .** Agreed we will continue as we are.
- j. **Stewards should continue to offer their valuable ministry of welcome and support, whilst also reminding the congregation of the local mitigations in place which will help people returning to mass feel more secure.** – Stewards to continue for Saturday and Sunday Masses no need for weekday Masses.
- k. **Collections: baskets at the door and contactless forms are recommended.** - Continue as we are.
- l. **Sign of Peace – a simple gesture such as a bow or nod to others is possible, but no physical contact.** Sign of peace to resume forthwith with ‘simple gesture’ in newsletter plus Fr Nicholas and to inform parishioners at Mass. N/A for Latin Mass
- m. **Holy Communion to be administered under one kind only. Ministers of the Eucharist must sanitise their hands beforehand and afterwards, and wear a face covering whilst distributing.** - Already being done and will continue. Fr Nicholas only to distribute Communion at this time. **Communion should be distributed in the hand anyone wishing to receive communion on the tongue should come last, and the minister will need to sanitise between each such communicant.** (For Fr Nicholas to undertake, N/A for Latin Mass).

It was agreed to review these items again in 4 weeks’ time particularly the social distancing and church capacity considering the prevailing local conditions for the virus at that time.

3. **The church hall and items sent by Diocese for Step 4 - COVID 19 for re-opening.**

(JF) asked if the documents sent by the Diocese for opening up the parish hall had been completed?
(MC) replied that risk assessments had been already done but not using the paperwork sent by the

diocese and it was not considered necessary to do them again. After a discussion it was agreed that (JF) would contact the diocese and see if the already done risk assessments were OK.

Response from the Diocese

“We are not able to delegate our risk assessments to third parties so if risk assessments have taken place we would need to be clear that those undertaken at least cover the elements set out in the guidance provided by CIS, the same applies to the pre-opening checklist.

If that has been reviewed and confirmed by a responsible person on behalf of the parish then there should be no need to redo them.”

(MC) & (NA) to review and confirm this has been done otherwise we may not be insured!.

4. **Visiting parishioners and housebound by clergy and members of the parish e.g. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy communion - Guidance from Diocese for Step 4 - COVID 19.** - It was agreed that as long as all the precautions laid down in the guidance were carried out Home visits could take place.
5. **Informing Parish of the outcome of the meeting** – By the newsletter, website, email and photocopies in the church.
6. **AOB**
 - a. Restarting the Coffee in the hall after 8:30am and 10:30am mass was raised. After a discussion it was felt by the meeting it would not make sense that we are continuing with our safety regarding social distancing in the church then go straight to the hall after Mass and have social interaction with no distancing also Diocese guidelines mention that they are also applicable to ancillary church buildings. Fr Nicholas announced there is to be no coffee after mass at the moment.
 - b. (Sr D) explained that Bishop David has been putting on a series of talks/ webinars to prepare for a 'Post Lockdown Church', he is encouraging every parish in the diocese to become a 'Welcoming Parish' Avril put on a few talks to help with this project which can be found on the Ministry Office website: '<https://pastoralministryoffice.org>'
 - c. (Sr D) said she was inviting those who are happy to be part of a Welcoming Team or offer ideas to get this project started. Initially it will simply be an overview visit to the church, to observe and note things that show a welcome or not e.g. signage and visibility to a newcomer; parking/disability spaces; facilities inside and outside the church / Hall/ website information about our church / facilities - then choose 3 things to change that would help to promote a more welcoming Parish.
7. Father Nicholas ended the meeting with a prayer.

Review to take place on 19th August. Whether a meeting is required to be decided nearer the time.

Notes written up by JF and NA

Checked by NA and BK