

GURC Church Meeting. 26.3.2022

Present 19 members plus minister

Apologies. 10

Devotions led by Hilary Redman who kindly stepped in at the last minute.

Previous minutes amended and signed by Revd Andrew Sellwood.

Matters arising

Safeguarding. Rosemary Terry

The ratification of Rosemary Terry as Safeguarding Lead and Mary Redman as Safeguarding Deputy was carried by the church meeting.

Rosemary provided information about the interviews for these posts following the Safer Recruitment process as we need to have evidence these have been followed.

Both Rosemary and Mary have taken on these roles at a challenging and changing time, both for the church and nationally in terms of Safeguarding. Rosemary gave an overview of her most recent experience in this field.

There will be a safeguarding mobile phone and email address. These actions follow a recommendation nationally. The Elders will discuss at their next meeting how these will be shared.

We need to update the safeguarding policy and make this available to all who wish to access it.

Serving Elders have a responsibility to ensure due process is followed in the areas of Health and Safety, Finances, Data Protection and Safeguarding. There can be implications both financially and legally if not done correctly. They are Trustees of the Church as laid out in the Charities commission mandate.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks need to be completed where required for all who work in the various church groups.

Annual safeguarding returns are required and information regarding safe recruitment is part of this remit.

Safeguarding Training needs to be undertaken by those working with Children and Adults at Risk. Rosemary is trying to see if face-to-face training can be arranged.

Kestro and Safeguarding.

The meeting was informed that due to some safeguarding discrepancies Kestro has had to cease. Steve Webber, who is the chairperson asked the questions as to why this has happened as Kestro is not affiliated to the church.

Steve reported that although Kestro does not have a written safeguarding policy in place they do operate within a safeguarding way, always working in pairs and that no volunteer is alone with any of their members for more than a minute or two.

Steve also stated his understanding that Disclosure and Barring is discretionary not compulsory.

Safeguarding Lead, Rosemary Terry responded to these questions. It was acknowledged that this situation is distressing to all concerned but Rosemary stated she is unable to provide all the facts due to confidentiality issues. The Revd. Andrew Sellwood is aware.

The Safeguarding Lead was made aware of a serious matter relating to Kestro and after further information was sought, it was necessary and her duty, to seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Coordinator, Belinda Neilson. It was on her recommendation that Kestro should be suspended for the time being.

Kestro has been in existence for many years and at no time has there been a formal hire agreement in place. Any outside organisation using church premises should sign an agreement which will include safeguarding. If they do not have their own safeguarding policy, they should work in line with Church procedures.

It was acknowledged that Kestro has unfortunately slipped through the net but that it is necessary to follow statutory guidance and have a written policy. In future anyone who takes on either a paid or voluntary role will need to be safely recruited and have a DBS check if required, before they begin any activity. To not do so could potentially lead to a serious issue.

The URC has recently changed its requirements as to who requires a DBS check. Someone who is supervised at all times should not require one.

It was noted that Belinda had recommended Kestro is suspended, and the question was asked why they cannot resume and not follow this recommendation. Rosemary stated they need to follow recommendations as there could be consequences if not doing so. These could include legal and /or financial consequences if recommendations are not followed through. She also added that she thought that if Kestro did not comply with the recommendations, the Serving Elders would need to consider whether Kestro could continue to hire the hall.

Belinda Nielson has sent an email to the Kestro Committee members with a list of questions. The Safeguarding Lead is aware of the content, received a copy which has been passed on to Revd. Andrew Sellwood for information. Any further questions from Kestro as to why they cannot resume need to be directed to Belinda Neilson at Synod. Rosemary Terry reiterated that there were serious and confidential reasons why she consulted with Belinda Neilson and sought advice, that she is not able to answer any further questions and strongly advised Steve and the Committee to respond to Belinda's email.

Revd Andrew Sellwood acknowledged the vital work of Kestro and the frustration this situation is bringing. He noted that Church has become more complicated and that we must abide by regulations and address issues to avoid long term consequences.

Kestro now need to liaise with Belinda Neilson who can direct them as to how to proceed. Matthew Smith stated that having Rosemary as Safeguarding lead with all her experience was of great value to the Church. He has now provided Rosemary with a copy of the Hall hire agreement template and will email a copy to Kestro. Anyone using our halls will have to abide by the signed agreement.

It is hoped that this situation will be addressed as soon as possible and that the Church can provide evidence we have done all we can to meet full compliance.

AGENDA ITEMS

Church Family news. Hilary Redman

The meeting shared news of the fellowship and upheld in prayer those with special needs at this time .This included those currently residing in Nursing Homes and those recovering from Covid.

Andrew's Time.

Andrew shared news of Sompting URC.

The Wednesday mid- week service and community garden project are both going well.

Anita and Malcolm Strudwick are now church members since 13.2.22.

Group reports

Finance and Hall lettings. Matthew Smith gave his report, a copy of which is in the minutes folder.

Approval of the Mission and Outreach budget was carried by the Church meeting.

There will be a gift day on 6th June when we hope to raise £5,000.

The resolution that mini fishes will come under the auspices of the Outreach group was carried by the church meeting.

Property. Bett Swierk

Ceiling panel in Cornwall room is now replaced and air vents put in. The other ceiling panels have also been checked and are safe.

Kitchen cupboard will be sorted on Monday.

Chair situation. We have an excess of 50 which will be offered to other local URC's .50 will be stored on the stage.

Fabric chairs are difficult to clean which is why they are not used in certain areas.

Please can any chairs used be put back from where they were taken.

Cleaning day. Saturday 30th April 9-12

Alternate date could be Wed 27th but Bett will not be available and someone else will need to take the lead. Details will be in Welcome.

Under Health and Safety Bett does regular checks around the property and requested we all do what we can to help each other. This includes wiping tables clean before putting them away.

Outreach Val Gill.

Val updated the meeting on the success of various activities in the church. A copy of this is in the minutes folder

Synod Report. Giles Wilson reported on Synod meeting which was held on 12.3.22.

A copy of this report is in the minutes folder.

Notices and correspondence

Val Gill has received information of events within the Southern Synod. A copy of this will be on the table at back of the church

AOB. None received.

Next meeting on Thursday 26th May at 7:30 pm

The meeting ended with a prayer and the sharing of the Grace