



Minutes of the meeting of The Seven Towers Joint Council

**Tuesday 9th September 2025 at 7.30 pm
at Nature in Art**

Present: Simon Trapnell (Chair & Benefice Warden), Ian Donald (Benefice Warden), Carolyn Wright (Sandhurst), Tony Crawshaw, Derek Wright, Lynda Chan (Prayer Team), Phil Cotton (The Leigh), Hazel Cotton, Andrew Wilkins, Ali Moseley (Worship Team), Rev Philippa Donald (Pastoral Team), Gareth Moseley (Safeguarding Officer), Graham Limbrick, Joan Howard.

Apologies: Rev Joe Knight, Jean Smith (Norton), Janine Smith (Stav/Bodd), Ellie Stevenson (Down Hatherley).

1. Welcome and opening prayers

Simon welcomed everyone and Rev Philippa led the meeting in prayer.

2. Approval of minutes An amendment was made to the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2025: number of new hymn books purchased was 35. The minutes were then approved.

3. Matters Arising None.

4. Clergy Report

Rev Joe had submitted the report before the meeting and Simon led the discussion in his absence.

a) Welcome Boards

Rev Joe had created a draft design for our Welcome Boards using The Leigh as an example.

- It was suggested that that the panels could be more effective as larger A1 rather than A2 boards. As examples of what might be possible, Simon showed the meeting some colourful examples with attractive pictures that had cost about £17 each.
- The purpose of the boards was discussed as in Rev Joe's report: "to welcome visitors into our buildings, capturing attention and imagination in a way that says something of the local story, the connection to the benefice, and inviting people to engage with the gospel".
- Generally all agreed that they would be eye-catching and welcoming to visitors and were positive about the prospect of having them in our churches.

Other comments included:

- Boards could include some interactive element, e.g. with a QR code. Prayer stations can also be set up alongside the boards.
- Boards could be in permanent positions or could move around the church. The examples shown are also waterproof, so could be outside our buildings too.
- Re Leigh example: suggestion that the word "merely" be removed from the second paragraph on the section "This Place".

b) New email addresses

Issues around @seventowers.org.uk email addresses not working fully on iPads.

Action: Simon to look into email problem.

5. Review and approval of Policy on Creation Care and Celebration

Rev Joe had redrafted this policy following discussion at the last JC meeting.

Discussion arose around:

- How we will advertise the policy and make it widely known around the benefice.
- How the policy reflects actions that we are already taking, e.g. use of green electricity.

- Whether the policy may be a factor in drawing people to us.
- The ability of the policy to support mission in the benefice and whether we should be developing a “mission/outreach” policy first.
- Whether the document is more of a “framework” than a “policy”.
- Our ability to commit to the details in the policy.
- Our obligation to take care of creation as followers of Jesus.
- How we express the DAC’s policy in the document and how flexible the wording should be.
- Our commitment to supporting Fairly Traded (or similarly certified, e.g., Rainforest Alliance) options for coffee and tea.
- Acknowledgement that the policy had been redrafted according to concerns and comments previously raised at the last JC meeting.

The meeting then voted on Rev Joe’s proposal:

PROPOSAL: I propose the Joint Council adopts this policy at our meeting on September 9th, 2025.

The proposal was approved by a simple majority of 7 votes to 6. (N.B. Although Gareth attends Joint Council, he doesn’t vote.)

6. Other benefice policies

The following policies are currently held in the benefice. All are out-of-date and need reviewing asap.

Policy	Last reviewed	Frequency of renewal	Reviewer
Safeguarding	Sept 2023	Annually	Gareth
Advertising	July 2022	Every 3 years	Derek
Social Media	May 2021	Annually	Ali
Health & Safety	Not known	Annually	Not decided
Equal Opportunities	Sept 2020	TBC	Gareth
Creation Care	Sept 2025	TBC	Simon

Gareth, Ali and Derek agreed to review their policies promptly.

We need to look into what other policies we should hold, e.g. GDPR, Mission & Outreach.

It was agreed that Policies will regularly appear on the JC agenda to ensure that, going forward, policies are kept up to date.

Action: Policies to be reviewed asap by those listed above.

Action: Carolyn to contact diocese for advice as to other policies that we should hold.

7. F & PC/Treasurer’s Report

Issues highlighted/raised/discussed:

- Still expecting out turn for the year to be a deficit of £20,000 to £25,000 but maybe nearer the middle of that range. Unless we make changes, the current level of annual deficit will continue and we will run out of money by the end of 2028. If we are to reduce our deficit to zero over the next 3 years, we need to increase giving, fund raising etc and/or reduce expenditure by £8,000 in each of next 3 years.
Action: Rev Joe to write article for Benefice magazine.
- Parish Share 2026 increase of £2,079 to £82,047. Finance committee had discussed this and proposed we agree to the rise. JC approved this commitment.
- Norton Parish Council are investigating the possibility of siting a mobile mast in the village. It was suggested that Norton Church could be an appropriate location. (An income can be generated from this).
Action: Joan to contact Norton Parish Council to discuss further.
- Loss of income from regular givers who gave large amounts having moved away or died.
- How to promote legacy giving? Nature in Art has a leaflet that we could look at and possibly adapt.
Action: Simon to send NinA leaflet to JC for consideration.

8. Matters arising from Parish/Team Reports

Prayer Team

- Pewsheets prayers: it was suggested at the last JC meeting that we could include names of benefice folks on a rolling rota in the prayers every week as a general principle, and Parish Reps would collect names. As names have only been collected from Stav/Bodd, the idea is on hold awaiting further discussion.

Comments were made here about the length of the pewsheets, and whether it should be posted on social media and on the website, bearing in mind the names that are on it. It was agreed that concerns about the pewsheets could be raised at the next meeting. This in turn led to discussion about the new website and whose contact numbers should be available there (currently only Carolyn's mobile number).

It was agreed that, as temporary measure until a firm policy is agreed, versions of the pewsheets that appear on the website or social media should not include people's names.

Worship Team

- New Year Celebration: the suggestion was made that this could be of a reflective or contemplative nature. As the next meeting of the Worship Team is not until November, perhaps discussion could take place earlier ready for inclusion in magazine.
- Review of current worship patterns: although this hasn't been in the remit of the Worship Team up till now, Ali is happy to receive and collect any comments.
- Hazel asked Ali to keep them informed of plans for Harvest Worship at The Leigh on Sunday 5th October.

Norton

Interest expressed in the idea of a Christian book collection, the books gathered to be housed in the church for people to read/borrow/take away.

The Leigh

- Frances: a query was raised over whether Frances has permanently retired from playing the organ and, if so, could we send her something to show our appreciation. As the position isn't entirely clear at the moment, it was agreed to send flowers in the meantime.

Action: Hazel to organise and send flowers to Frances from the benefice.

- The Prayer Stations set up in the Prayer Room so support the recent Global Week of Prayer will remain there for a while and people were encouraged to visit.
- Issues remain with the organ and await attention.

9. Safeguarding

- Nothing to report re contacts.
- Gareth is still working at collecting previous documents regarding safeguarding training of JC members and others in benefice. It's believed that all JC members have completed Stage One.
- Gareth is still working on 2 further policies: Safer Recruitment and Meetings Code of Conduct.

10. AOB

- Rev Philippa offered to help Parish Reps work on Prayer Stations to accompany Welcome Boards.
- Simon is still collecting good quality tools for "Tools with a Mission".
- Contact details for people wanting to enquire about weddings or baptisms should be in magazine. Could we have an enquiry form on website?
- There is a problem with a badger sett at the back of Sandhurst churchyard. The meeting approved application of licence to deal with it.

- Gareth is happy to have his contact details made available on website safeguarding page.
- A local author known to Carolyn would like an opportunity to photograph bats in a church setting (not revealing the precise location). Down Hatherley was suggested as a location.
- Further discussion about the new website: initial accessibility of events on home page, encouragement to Parish Reps and Team Leaders to take ownership of their pages and get trained in how to update them (Ellie & Lynda have done this recently), inclusion of pictures of key people and events.
- CYP: query whether this has ceased permanently or will be reinstated. Hopefully it will have a fresh start in the new year.
- Lynda is now full JC Secretary and will take over responsibility for collecting and sending out reports and agenda for future meetings.

The meeting closed at **9.25 pm** with the Grace.

Dates of next meetings: Tuesday 11th November 2025 and Tuesday 13th January 2026.