

**MINUTES FROM OPEN PCC MEETING
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 13TH 2025 AT 7.00PM
IN THE WILSON ROOM**

The meeting was chaired by Clive Ward who welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming.

Revd Rosemary Mason led the opening prayers.

The Standing Committee were introduced.

The church wardens and Martin Lockwood (former church warden) were thanked for their work over the past 18 months.

It was explained that this meeting was to inform attendees of the current situation, the proposal and next actions. No decisions will be taken at this meeting but at the PCC meeting to be held on November 27th.

1. Where we are now and how we got here.

The timeline of events was outlined:

January 23	CS resignation
March 23	CS Departure - Vacancy
April 23	Discussions started on vacancy filling
September 24	Switch to House for Duty model. Parish Profile drawn up
March & April 24	1 st Advertisement in church times. No response
July 24	Advertisement and Parish Profile revised.
August & September 24	2 nd Advertisement in church times. No response
October 24	Further meetings. 'Plan B'
November	Open PCC

The process had taken a significant time due to difficulties in getting the appropriate people from the diocese together for discussion. Former Archdeacon Paul was promoted to Bishop of Dorking so Archdeacon Martin was involved; when the new archdeacon of Surrey, Katherine, was appointed she had some new ideas.

What the parish could afford was discussed and so the House for Duty proposal was made.

The reasons there were no applicants for our rector were:

3 different churches

3 days a week only

No pay

Lots of more straightforward jobs out there, the Church Times is full of them

Eventually all the appropriate people got together and the proposal has been made.

Tom Murphy thanked the team from EOFG who were involved in the process.

2. The Proposal for EOFG, Ewhurst, Okewood and Forest Green

A number of propositions had been considered:

Re-advertise – Unlikely to be successful and delays everything further

Merge EOFG with another parish- would need major structural reorganisation- big task for another parish to take on EOFG without additional resources

Use parish share money to pay a priest - C of E won't agree to it and we can't advertise for a post without their approval; plus they own the vicarage and church. Our current Parish Share is £50K and we could not afford any further monies to pay a priest.

At the meeting in September Bishop Paul was really clear from the start that the only viable option was to break up EOFG. His view is that the EOFG merger hasn't worked as was hoped, and that probably it was a mistake from the start to put together three very different churches and congregations with little natural affinity.

Hence Plan B that Ewhurst and Okewood and Forest Green to be separated, and this is the proposal, agreed by all interested parties.

Plan for Ewhurst:

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Ewhurst will again become an independent parish (possibly named Ewhurst and Ellens Green?) It will form an association with Cranleigh as it is already in the Cranleigh Deanery In the short term Roy Woodhams (Area Dean) will be priest in charge, so there will be no priest in the vicarage

Roy Woodhams will visit former church congregation members to persuade them to rejoin. It is hoped that the congregation and the church finances will recover quickly to enable an early appointment of a minister, which will result in full independence for Ewhurst.

Plan for Okewood and Forest Green:

Okewood and Forest Green will again become an independent parish.

In the short term: it will form an association with Dorking Deanery, already links exist with Capel / Ockley, who are part of Dorking Deanery

Peter Nevins (vicar of Holmwood and Area Dean) will be priest in charge

Longer term (possibly 2 years) there will be a reorganisation of Dorking Deanery as several retirements are due. If the parish is flourishing, it could remain independent, if not it will merge with another parish. It was noted that there was no rectory attached to Okewood and Forest Green.

These decisions are with the parishioners who need to advise the church wardens of their views. If the plan is not accepted, it could be amended.

Questions:

It was confirmed that the churches' income is not sufficient to pay for a full time incumbent and the House for Duty advertisement had no applicants. If EOFG had carried on paying for a full time minister, they would have run out of money.

Both Archdeacons have approved the proposal. There was a PCC meeting in Homewood last evening to discuss and one at Cranleigh this evening. All have to agree the proposal.

3. What next? Where do we go from here?

The proposal will be discussed at Okewood on Sunday (17th). Views from this meeting are to go to Church Wardens and PCC members before 27th November.

At that meeting there will be a vote on the principle of separation, if that is passed then Ewhurst PCC members will vote on their proposal and Okewood and Forest Green members on theirs. If there is a positive outcome then there will be further detailed discussions on how to move forward.

The Parish Share was reduced by £5K for House of Duty, and so the finances of EOFG should break even at the end of the year. There is allot of legal work to do with the Charity Commission and HMRC in order to split up the finances. If the parish continues as it is then the reserves will be used up; more attendees and income will be required in order to employ a minister. The current Parish Share will be split according to the number of reported attendees which is sent annually to the diocese. Ewhurst will still have to contribute £18K for the rectory and if it is let, the rent goes to the diocese. The rectory cannot be sold as it belongs to the diocese, however there may be room for negotiation over the ongoing rectory costs.

The EOFG parish is financially powerless and growth is required to increase the income to make the resulting parishes viable. The Parish Share has to be paid and is only held over if the money is not available to pay it (this is the case with many parishes). The aim would be to become two financially viable parishes.

A merger of Okewood and Forest Gren with Ockley had been vetoed.

Roy Woodhams is very positive about the proposal and will provide leadership for Ewhurst. He will be here to encourage and help and feels Ewhurst will be able to stand alone again.

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The rectory is now empty and it will not be possible to let it until the current situation is resolved, i.e. the PCC has voted in agreement.

If the parish is split, Elizabeth Coleman will be offered two positions, administrator of both parishes. She will currently remain in post to assist with the transition and then set up a new office for Okewood and Forest Green.

News and Views serves the whole parish of EOFG and the current editor, Peter Bennett will be standing down at the end of the year. It is likely that the December issue will be the last in its current form. Peter was thanked for all his work on the magazine.

Okewood and Forest Green have sufficient service leaders and clergy, with John Marsh and soon Sarah Murphy. They will need their own PCC, treasurer, secretary and another church warden and will have to be a new charity. Discussions will need to be held about this over the next weeks, so relevant people will need to be available to progress this.

Ewhurst can continue to have Rosemary Mason for Eucharistic services and Cranleigh will provide other clergy as required. Roy Woodhams retires from the Area Dean role next year so will have more time for the parishes. Ellens Green is part of the Ewhurst parish and the boundaries will remain the same.

Questions

Ewhurst would like Amber Wood to return as lay minister after her year at Leith Hill benefice. There may be implications for the Ewhurst Infants School which are experiencing low numbers of children at present. Liz Tingley will be attending a meeting about this situation. Fundraising concerts are being held and Roy Woodhams is very supportive of the school. The new headmaster is an inspirational Christian and Rosemary Mason takes assemblies.

It is possible that Okewood and Forest Green will have their own minister in the future. There is no idea at present as the churches will need to grow to enable that to happen. There is no rush to move this on.

It will be very difficult if one proposed parish agrees with the resolution and the other doesn't. Okewood and Forest Green could not be an independent parish so would have to be taken over by another one. All interested parties would have to agree and the vote could be a majority decision rather than unanimous.

The Ewhurst church wardens and Clive Ward will be in the Wilson Room after the service on Sunday 17th November. Tom Murphy will be a Okewood. The congregations are to contact their PCC members with their views; Forest Green members can contact any PCC member.

A meeting with Roy Woodhams was requested (he is coming to take the service at Ewhurst on December 1st and will be available afterwards). Concern was expressed that Cranleigh may not have enough clergy to help Ewhurst when needed. A single point of contact there might be useful. It is not likely that Cranleigh would get a new curate to assist with Ewhurst.

The Wardens were thanked again for all the work they have done.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 8.15pm.