**The Astwell Benefice**

*Helmdon with Stuchbury and Radstone, and Syresham with Whitfield,Lois Weedon with Weston and Plumpton and Wappenham*

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Finance Committee – Minutes 11/12/23

**Present:** Ann Netten, Philip Thompson, Alice Palmer

**Apologies** : Bill Elkington, Brenda Faragher, Sue TImmis & Claire Bonner

**Minutes**

We agreed the minutes from 19/6/23 were accurate with one typo correction.

**Matters Arising**

* Radstone’s old account has finally been closed and the funds are now held in Helmdon’s account.
* Bill had circulated the details of the group electricity scheme.
* Some work has taken place in the Rectory garden.
* Syresham and Helmdon have both purchased SelectaDNA smart water kits. We were not sure if Whitfield had theirs in place.

Action CB

* AP had passed Rev. Diane’s United Astwell Benefice scheme document to Trinitas who replied that this was a proposal not the actual Scheme and sent a Scheme proforma that should have been completed as a ‘Partial Scheme’. They added that the scheme as it stood was not likely to be eligible for join insurance as individual PCCs look after their own buildings under the plan.

AP passed this message to the Archdeacon, who in turn passed it on to Andrew Roberts at the Diocese – here is his reply:

Dear All

Hmmmm

The Bishop’s Council approved the attached scheme in October 2022

It is a partial scheme as it’s not a full transfer of the functions of the individual PCCs

It may be helpful (for the future) to recast the attached in the form of the Partial template

I’m not sure what insurance you need for the joint council as it is purely strategic and does not possess anything?

With all good wishes Andrew

We concluded that, in the light of these comments from both Trinitas and the Diocese, this was a fruitless avenue to pursue.

**Parish & Benefice Accounts Review**

HELMDON

After some very successful fundraising Helmdon were able to top up their Parish Share by £2500. They are in a good position at the moment although regular giving is slightly down and there is likely to come a need at some point in the next year to remind folk of the need to support the Church’s work and how useful regular payments are. The Friends of the Church have paid for an upgrade to the sound system, this is currently a loan but may become a gift depending on how much help is needed with Quinquennial works. It looks as though the Quinquennial works will be manageable. Helmdon is also holding £344 for the diocese from the Institution of Rev. Hugh. AN will pass this to AP to be sent to the diocese. AP will ask if it could be counted as part of our share. During the meeting they received a £314 grant from the diocese towards their inspection costs.

Action AP/AN

LOIS WEEDON

The Coffee Morning fundraising in Lois Weedon is still working well and fundraising income has increased. However other income is significantly lower. Two regular donors have elected to transfer their payments to the Fabric account. Lois usually relies heavily on money from collections and this is also down due to less services.

Income from Regular donations, collections and donations is down by £1766 though there are still Christmas service to come which may help somewhat. There was also a Sundry payment of £754 last year and the utilities grant from the diocese of £755.

Fabric costs have increased over the year due to chancel repairs and electrical issues.

“At the current rate, their Regular Giving and Collections just about covers normal day to day expenses, including Insurance and Utilities. There is not much left over and they continue to rely on fund raising events to support Parish Share and other costs.”

SYRESHAM

Syresham has been supported by their Friends and Trust fund in keeping the maintenance of the church going and installing their new Sound System. Regular Giving has decreased due to folk moving away. Syresham are in the same position as Helmdon in that they rely on a few long-standing givers and need to encourage some new supporters to give regularly.

Fundraising was disappointing falling on the hottest and then the coldest day of the year for the fete and Christmas Fair respectively. However Parish Share, Insurance and utility payments are keeping on track at the moment. They will not be able to pay the full share but hope to do better than last year.

The challenge next year is to meet the costs of new shingles on the steeple. They need to raise £80,200 and find that they do not have access to the capital in their Trust Fund – income only. However, due to the generosity of Friends, congregation and community as well as NHCT grant fund a good start has been made. ~£30,000 pledged so far with a loan of £45,000 promised. It is hoped to make up the final £5,000 through gifts and they are awaiting the results of four further grant applications.

WAPPENHAM

Wappenham finances are, once again in a good state. Fundraising, Fete, Dog show and Beer Festival, has been very successful. Collections are lower largely due last year being helped by some large weddings and funerals. They will be able to pay their full Parish Share.

They are using QR codes in the church to help raise funds through sumup. Other parishes are encouraged to do the same.

Action AN AP CJ CB

Maintenance of the Churchyard is now shared between the Church and Parish Council. A formal agreement has been drawn up and the PC will contribute £1,600 per annum towards the upkeep and also help encourage volunteers to do the work. One regular donor has transferred their regular giving to buying a ride on mower for the churchyard. Their regular giving will restart once the mower costs have been met.

WHITFIELD

With the help of gift aid income and a donation from the Friends to cover the building part of their insurance, Whitfield remain solvent but unable to pay their full Parish Share. Unfortunately the Friends’ account has been frozen by Barclays, so there is a cheque for £1298.64 that cannot be cashed at present.

Collections are down but Fundraising and events together are increased.

Sadly Whitfield do not think next year will bring improvement.

BENEFICE

The Benefice finances are still sound. The running expenses of the Benefice have almost been covered by income from fees (occasional services). This means that all the Events (Rogation and Maundy Thursday) and Fundraising income has been put towards the Parish Share.

We have paid £45,249.30 of our Parish Share to date and hope to increase this to over £60,000 by the end of the year. It is unlikely that we will reach the £62,714 paid last year given the information from parishes above.

**PARISH SHARE**

Church general account reserves from profile:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Helmdon | Lois | Syresham | Wappenham | Whitfield |
| £1,500 | Anything positive | £1,000 | Anything positive | £800 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Helmdon | Lois | Syresham | Wappenham | Whitfield | Benefice Fundraising |
| Parish Share prior to mtg | £19,200 | £3,918 | £10,904.94 | £7,364.50 | £3030.00 | £7275.42 |
| 2023 Estimates | £22,700 | £3,918 | £13,104,94 | £9,729.00 | £3,260.00 | £7275.42 |
|  | 96% | 40% | 75% | 100% | 59% | 209% |
|  | **BENEFICE TOTAL** | | **£59,987.36** | | **86%** | |

Once Whitfield’s cheque (see above) has been processed they may be able to pay a further £800. AP ST & CB will discuss whether the Benefice should allocate this money for them in advance. It would take them to £4060 75% and the Total to **£60,787.36 87%.**

AP has asked Lois Weedon if they would consider contributing some of their general reserve to top up this year.

**BUDGETS**

We looked at the budgets for all the parishes. These have not yet been agreed by the Church Councils but give us an idea of challenges ahead.

Helmdon are challenged by needing to find an extra £800 to cover the cost of insuring Radstone Church. Budget deficit £5600

Lois hope for grants of £5000 (already applied for) plus a grant to refund VAT of £2500 to help cover the repairs to the chancel. An increase in collections and regular giving would help to get a lot closer to meeting the Parish Share. Budget surplus £478

Syresham plan to cover general maintenance with carry over from this year. Non-steeple repair works are also in hand. They have £8500 in hand towards the steeple and £1500 already paid. There budget is similar to last year apart from : Loan £45,000 which they hope to pay off with grants – already applied for, £20,000 pledges towards the steeple already made but not yet received and a further £5000 fundraising from the community. They plan to increase their Parish Share contribution but are unlikely to reach the full amount. Budget deficit £3300

Wappenham have some fabric expenditure on the south roof and pointing to budget for along with further flagpole and masonry repairs. The Churchyard has been allocate £1600 supplied by the CC, it is hoped that this is an over estimate. Budget Deficit £4700

Whitfield have on-going problems with congregation size and finding a venue for their fete. We didn’t discuss their budget as BF, ST and CB haven’t had a chance to consider it.

The Benefice budget was agreed, it contains an estimated surplus of £900. We agreed that Sarah Rudkin’s salary would be increased to £11.50 per hour in April. Costs are necessarily uncertain due to the new regime in place.

**BENEFICE EXTRA SPENDING**

AP asked for agreement that we use some of the carry over held in the account for honorariums of £100 for Paul Stothard, Sarah Rudkin and Bill Elkington as a token of thanks for their hard work over the interregnum. This was agreed.

We also agreed to top up our giving to charity to reach the 10% of Fundraising requested by the Fundraising Committee.

**AOB** None

**NEXT MEETING** : January(tbc) 11am @ Vine Cottage.