



The Astwell Benefice

St Mary Magdalene Helmdon with Stuchbury & St Lawrence Radstone
St James the Great Syresham,
St John the Evangelist Whitfield,
St Mary and St Peter Lois Weedon & Weston with Plumpton
St Mary the Virgin Wappenham
www.astwellparishes.org.uk

DRAFT Minutes of Benefice PCC Meeting Monday 19th January 2026

HW opened the meeting with a prayer.

1. **Apologies:** FM, PB & WS (nothing heard from GR)
Present: KB, CN, SW, ST, CB, HW, SR, PS, FH, MS, AP, DB.
2. **The minutes of the previous BPC meeting** held on 6th Oct 2025 were approved unanimously.
3. **The Committee Reports by Committee Chairs and Benefice Church Council Reports** had been read in advance:
Matters arising:
 - a. **The 2024/25 Astwell Benefice accounts** were unanimously approved for audit. **Action: AP**
 - b. **Safeguarding** - PS had been in touch with FM who could not attend. She will attend a workshop called 'Trauma Informed Church'. PS will circulate a link to this. He also said that there were outstanding Safeguarding checks. AP asked if there was a spreadsheet showing these, and PS said he would follow this up with FM. **Action: PS/FM**
 - c. **Let's Shine** - FH said that he had circulated the Let's Shine Constitution and grant-making policy documents and had not heard anything. It is hereby recorded that the BPC agrees with/adopts these two documents.
4. **Services for Feb, March & April 2026 inc Easter** - PS had circulated the up-to-date service schedule, and this was approved by those present. PS said he would not be available in February and asked MS/FH and AP to cover LW & Syr services on 2nd Sunday, and WS to cover Helmdon's service on 4th Sunday – to be confirmed. **Action: PS**
5. **Update on Single PCC/Parish** – PS laid out how a Single PCC would work and said that he had been looking at the Benefice Mission Statement:
Whilst always respecting the individual histories and identities of our six ancient buildings and their communities, we work as one, together as a united Benefice, in governance, in mission and in ministry. Our aims are:
 - *to grow disciples, to reach out into our communities and beyond and to serve Christ in all we do*
 - *to increase church attendance, involve children of all ages, share our knowledge, experience and enthusiasm and do all this as one Church in the body of Christ**We are working together to face each new challenge through Christ, with Christ and in Christ.*

The question of whether the Benefice should become a single Parish was discussed at length. There was a free flowing and frank discussion on this subject. Some of the key points made were as follows:

PS suggested it was not clear that the Benefice was succeeding in the aims it had set itself. MS felt that the Benefice was running successfully as it was currently configured, that there was no need for change and that people in general were against moving to a single parish structure. PS put before the meeting some salient predictions as to the future of the Church of England; the age profile of congregations was concerning, as was the difficulty of replacing parish clergy given the large number of retirements taking place. MS proposed that a questionnaire accompanied by an information document be sent out to parishioners, so that they could be consulted and make up their own minds. HW thought that the Benefice was not yet in receipt of all the information required to ground a proper understanding of what being a single Parish entailed and to enable a serious review of the

pros and cons of moving to a single Parish structure. After many contributions to the discussion, **SW** suggested that a proposal on moving to the Benefice becoming a single Parish should be created for the BPC. This could (with any adjustments thought appropriate) be put to the PCCs and then to the Electoral Rolls, who would vote on it (as had been done when creating the existing Benefice structure). **CB** proposed that **PS** and **HW** create such a proposal, and this was carried with a show of hands. **Action: PS/HW**

6. **Payment of Parish Share:** AP said that Whitfield would not be able to pay their 2026 Parish Share using the current percentages. HW said that the Parish Share had been paid in full last year, and that it would be paid in full again. After some discussion, it was agreed that AP and the Parish Treasurers would meet to decide how the Share would be divided up, and that the CWs/Reps could advise/attend as they thought fit. **Action: AP/Treasurers & CWs**

As the meeting had taken longer than expected, agenda items 7, 8 and 10 were deferred to a future meeting (Parish Nurse & Children/Youth Worker & Looking to the Future).

9. **Feedback from a meeting with Whitfield PCC and others (HW/PS)** – this was concerning Whitfield becoming a ‘Festival’ church. The idea has been put before Whitfield CC and Friends and they are considering the matter. **Action: CB/ST & HW**
11. **Any Other Business:**
- Agree dates for 2026 BPC meetings – SR will circulate a list of dates for these and the 2026 APCM, based on past years’ dates. **Action: SR**

The Grace was said and the meeting ended.

DRAFT SMR 02.02.26