



## The Astwell Benefice

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

# Finance Committee – Minutes 19/1/26

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**PRESENT:** Alice Palmer, Philip Thompson, Ann Netten, Clive Johnson

**APOLOGIES :** Claire Bonner

### **MINUTES**

We agreed the minutes from 1/12/25

### **MATTERS ARISING**

- AP and PT had looked at providing pie charts to display parish income and expenditure. PT's looked better and CJ will also look into doing the same and one of them will provide AN with instructions on how to do it in excel.

### **PARISH & BENEFICE ACCOUNTS**

#### **Benefice**

The Benefice has paid the full Parish Share again, £74,211. Several parishes paid more than their allotted share to help us achieve this. With £7.56 to carry forward to next year.

The sundry amounts were largely money coming in and being returned.

Benefice income from fees was £5179 and expenditure on benefice running costs was £7592. This means our reserves have been depleted and we have just £2528.82 to help fund 2026 costs.

Of the £20593.06 in the account at the end of the year £5950.89 is allocated to Let's Shine, £11672.82 to the Let's Shine Community Fund and £447.01 is the choir fund.

AP has been trying to set up a Lloyds account to avoid having to process payments through her personal account. Unfortunately the application has been rejected. CJ and AP are not charged for their accounts at Nat West and Barclays.

The accounts were approved for auditing.

#### **Syresham**

Was able to pay £18550, 101% of their Parish Share. Total unrestricted income was £19875 and expenditure £21445 which meant our carry forward this year was just over £1000. Regular giving has increased but collections are lower.

They spent a large amount completing work on the steeple and received grants and VAT reclaims to help with this. They are still left with a loan of £12998.

They have set accepted a quote of just of £8134 for completion of Quinquennial works and a new Quinquennial inspection is due this year.

## **Helmdon**

Helmdon's accounts are healthy. They paid 107% of their parish share. Gift Aid has increased as they had been able to claim several years worth of Gift Aid for one contributor. They had received a large donations enabling them to purchase a new organ, they are now waiting to progress work on vestry reorganisation.

They also received grants towards the churchyard walls repairs.

Sundry expenditure is mostly Reading Room costs that are reclaimed from the Benefice.

## **Wappenham**

Wappenham paid 110% of their parish share. Their collections are down, partly due to less services and partly due to folk moving to regular giving through standing orders. Gift Aid was claimed for two years.

They need to do more fund raising next year. Pub Night income is split between the Church the Village Hall and Dane Tree Hospital. Next year they may feel more should be given to the Village Hall which has issues with the roof.

A lot of work was done in the churchyard prior to handing over responsibility to the Parish Council. A new gate has also been installed to allow mower access. The Parish Council has set a budget of £500 towards churchyard maintenance for next year.

Fabric costs included work on the alarm, lightening conductor, windows and boiler.

They have a quinquennial due this year.

CJ asked about the alarm and fire costs, PT explained that a lot of work had been needed this year but he has now entered into a contract that should help cover future costs.

## **Lois Weedon**

The Lois Weedon accounts are exceptionally healthy this year and they too paid 110% of their Parish Share allocation. Regular Giving is up, partly due to some who joined part way through the previous year who have now completed a full year of payments. Collections are stable. Gift Aid is up as it includes 2024 and 2025 claims -the 2025 claim arrived unexpectedly at the end of December.

There was no summer party raising funds this year, it had been agreed that this could take place in the rectory in 2026.

Money was also received from folk paying to have the church floodlights lit to celebrate anniversaries and birthdays.

The sundry payments were for auditing and money raised for Let's Shine. The only charitable donation this year had been to the British Legion.

Some fabric work has been completed including window cleaning and checking drains and a tree survey. There is A LOT more to come. CJ is in the process of completing a faculty application for work on the parapet wall, mortar replacement, internal works and

down pipe enlargement. Costs are likely to be in the range of £27000. Some of this will come from the £16,159 in the account at the end of the year but not yet allocated. The Friends of the Church have offered to fund full redecoration of the interior once the damp has been sorted.

### **Whitfield**

Whitfield's collections and regular giving are down. They received donations from The Friends of St John towards fabric work and insurance of the building. They paid £3510 towards their Parish Share and £719 in charitable donations to The three pillars, Brackley food bank, British Legion and the Children's society.

There was no fabric expenditure this year and PT noted that they may need some reserves for future work.

They are considering becoming a festival church.

### **Parish Share.**

We discussed how the Parish Share might be allocated this year given Whitfield's request to reduce their target and the lack of benefice income. There had been talk of some benefice events being planned but these would still need to be run by the parishes. *(NB this plan has not transpired).*

One option was to set no target, just each parish contribute what they could. AN liked this plan however others felt that it would be hard to persuade their councils to be generous without a set target and we would return to the days of being wary of paying more than the "fair share".

AP had circulated a possible share based on the old percentages but with Whitfields contribution reduced to £3500 and the benefice to £1000 (Rogation). However AN thought we should recognise if the figures looked too high people might well just give up..

AP noted that the Parish Share had been put on the agenda for the BPCC meeting so she could feed treasurers views into that discussion. *(NB the BPCC meeting ran out of time and they have passed the decision back to the treasurers. PS had offered to come and join a meeting. Any decisions could be fed back to the BPCC for approval)*

### **AOB NONE**

**NEXT MEETING** : email exchanges to finalise APCM document with audited accounts. Further meeting to discuss share to be arranged. 11am at Vine Cottage.