**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 19/6/23

**Present:** Ann Netten Philip Thompson Alice Palmer Bill Elkington Brenda Faragher Clive Johnson

**Apologies** :

The meeting opened with a prayer.

**Minutes**

We agreed the minutes from 13/1/23

**Matters Arising**

BF has had a lot of trouble answering money laundering problems with Barclays and hasn’t had a chance to investigate online banking. Helmdon have also had some problems accessing money held in an old Radstone account. BE will go in to the Banbury branch with Penny Bonner to try and get the account out of dormancy. Otherwise they will try writing a cheque again to see what the reason for bouncing it is.

Action BE BF

There is still something using electricity in Lois Weedon church early morning and in the night, not a lot but they are still trying to track it down. They have received a further £150 grant from the government towards electricity – all churches should have received this. BE will forward details of a new heating system involving mats on pews that heat the people not the space. This is suitable for churches where pews are static. See https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/net-zero-2030/net-zero-carbon-consultancy-heating-solutions for a webinar. Helmdon belong to a group that negotiate the best tariff for church utilities. BE will circulate details.

Action BE

We have not heard back from Trinitas with regard to savings for group insurance. AP will phone them to discuss. Wappenham are now open to joining Trinitas for the correct price.

Action AP

CJ warned folk that the Smart Water forensic marking treatment for roofs (i.e. lead) needs to be separately registered annually with Smart Water, unless your insurance policy is from Ecclesiastical. With Ecclesiastical the registration is included within the policy. Lois Weedon changed their insurer from Ecclesiastical to Trinitas in 2020 and they provide the same cover terms but with SelectaDNA as their marking partner. It is a critical condition for cover within the policy. Parishes who moved insurance companies recently need to check their status.

Action AN AP CB

**Terms of Reference**

We agree to remove delegations for Church Councils but to ensure expenses are offered to the Pastoral Care committee. (Secretaries note: and Lay readers).

**Parish & Benefice Accounts**

Highlights

Benefice finances are in a good position at the moment. Fees are down but so are expenses. We hope to have paid over 40% of our Parish Share after our June contributions. Fundraising events and the Rogation lunch have made excellent contributions.

We discussed online giving – the Wappenham sumup machine didn’t work at the Barn Dance – CJ had seen Goodbox systems in other churches but you pay at least £15 per month for these systems see https://www.goodbox.com/pricing/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIz8GsgPr78wIVkeJ3Ch1xdAJiEAAYAiAAEgLYZvD\_BwE . You can also set up giving campaigns on Give a Little – see the video at the bottom of https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/giving-and-payments/online-giving

Helmdon have had a welcome contribution from gift aid. There regular giving is down slightly due to the economic situation. AN will keep monitoring the situation as we go through the year. They will have paid 43% of their parish share by the end of the month. They need to find £5000 to fix the sound system in the church. The Helmdon Friends have agreed to fund this with a loan, which may become a grant depending on the results of the Quinquennial survey. There was some discussion on the balance between paying parish share and covering these costs AP said lowering the Parish Share should be a last resort but if the church is in dire need of work then that obviously ends up taking priority. For example Syresham need to raise over £60,000 and will explore all other avenues before considering touching any money (regular giving, collections and regular fund raising) allocated to the parish share.

AN asked if the costs of the electrical inspection could be recouped from the diocese – no one knew so AN will call the diocese to find out.

Action AN

Lois Weedon’s cash account is in a good position. The Church Council are reluctant to give any more to their Parish Share until they know how much they will need to find to fix the stone arch above the window in the chancel. It seems the Restoration Fund used to be allocated to different projects, it is now all one fund. CJ has suggested putting the server project on hold until the window arch is sorted as this urgently needs repairing and will cost between nine and thirteen thousand pounds. The Friends have agreed to contribute towards this – but there may be other costs to come. Lois have paid 27% of their parish share to date, another £400 would bring them to 31%

Syresham’s day to day running is in a fairly good state at the moment although regular giving is not as high as it was. There is some fundraising coming up so it is hoped this will help with parish share. AP is hoping they will be able to top up their parish share contribution so that they will have contributed 30%. They should receive £5000 from their Trust fund for maintenance works in July and have £20,000 in hand to cover Quinquennial costs apart from the steeple. The steeple is going to require contributions from fund raising, grants and the trust but they are awaiting firm quotes.

Wappenham’s finances are in a good state at present and they hope to top up to over 50% of their parish share contributions this month. Collections are going well and they have various fund raising events planned: a history tour, dog show, fete and beer festival. They hope to make more use of the church to draw people in to at least visit. There have been no non-regular expenses so far this year although they are awaiting an invoice for fixing the fallen masonry in the tower.

Whitfield’s appear to have a good amount of cash in hand but regular giving and collections seem to be down. We were not sure if they were planning a fete this year but the events such as the Mexican Evening have been very successful. They will have paid 34% of their parish share by the end of the month.

**AOB**

The Rectory garden needs a lot of work it is looking a mess. The diocese should be responsible for this. BE agreed to discuss the matter with Frank to see if we can get some help to tidy up.

Action BE

**NEXT MEETING** : Monday 11th December 11am @ Vine Cottage.