

## Annual PCC Report for the Stradishall Parish Council AGM 2022

Because of Covid restrictions in 2021, there were only 2 PCC Meetings held, and the PCC was further reduced in number to 3 which left only the Rector and 2 others to take on the responsibility of the Church and building.

In August 2021 the builder who had been employed to replace tiles on the Chancel roof became worried about the tiles falling on the adjacent public footpath and the roof condition itself was now in a very perilous state. The last Quinquennial inspection in 2017 indicated a total renovation cost of a minimum £200,000 which will probably now have rocketed to £250,000 plus. The windows, stonework, wall paintings, the 2 side aisle roofs as well as the Chancel roof and plaster all now needed urgent attention and there could almost certainly be rotten timbers hidden from view.

The alternatives were either to talk to the Diocese with a view to permanently close the Church, or, to form a Restoration Committee of villagers to undertake this project. If the building was to be renovated then money was needed to bring it into the 21st such as heating, updating the lighting and providing proper disabled facilities. Although there are grants available, the PCC has no one who could spearhead such a massive fundraising campaign or the money to employ an expert on grant applications.

Some in the past had wondered whether the village would like there to be a joint community centre/church but there are problems with no official car park and the building is Grade 1 listed.

Therefore, a village meeting was held on Wednesday September 15<sup>th</sup> in the Parish Church and 44 people attended including 3 Parish Councillors, villagers and other organisation representatives. After long discussions and some offers of help the meeting closed on a positive note to try the joint community/church approach. Restoring the Church comes first though.

On October 7<sup>th</sup> 17 people including the Archdeacon met at the Benefice Hall in Wickhambrook to discuss the way forward. After much discussion it was agreed to form 4 groups:

Group 1: Major fundraising through grant applications.

Group 2: Local Fundraising within Stradishall.

Group 3: Restoration of the Church through architects, builders etc. and to obtaining Diocese faculties.

Group 4: Churchyard maintenance, but not cutting the main grass which Adrian Lee undertakes.

The PCC has to approve all decisions from the above groups.

A further 2 PCC meetings was held and at the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 new residents were co-opted onto the PCC committee.

Since then, all groups have been busy putting together plans and the Church was able to re-join the Benefice Service Rota. Several people attended the special Remembrance Day service in the Church in November and it was a full Church for the Carol Service in December which was followed by mulled wine and homemade mince pies. We are looking forward to the planned Easter weekend activities and are busy organising the Queen's Platinum Jubilee for the village.

As always, we are grateful for the annual £600 that comes from the Parish Council each year which helps maintain the Churchyard and that will help Group 4 cut back the trees behind the Church and pay for a skip to remove the accumulated rubbish from that area.

Jane Helliwell

PCC Secretary