



WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL



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Minutes of the Virtual Annual Parish Meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday 12th May 2021 at 7.02pm.

	The Annual Parish Meeting is a statutory meeting of the parish electorate (Local Government Act 1972, Part 1, s9(1)). It is not a parish council meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting must be held between 1st March and 1st June (Local Government Act 1972, Sch12, Part III, p14(1)). The parish council chairman calls the meeting and if present, chairs the meeting (Local Government Act 1972, Sch12, Part III, p15(1) + p17(1)). If the parish council chairman is absent, the vice-chairman if present, shall preside. If neither are in attendance, the meeting may appoint a person to take the chair and for the purposes of this meeting, that person will have the powers and authority of the chairman (Local Government Act 1972, Sch12, Part III, p17(1) + (3)). Parish meetings have a general power to discuss parish affairs and pass resolutions, however there is no prescribed format for this meeting and its recommendations are not binding on the parish council. Any such recommendations can, if appropriate to do so, be taken forward for consideration by the parish council or any of its committees. All local electors are entitled to speak and vote at the Annual Parish Meeting; others may attend but not speak or vote.	
Present	Gareth Lloyd, Chairman Wootton Parish Council – in the chair; Gerald Bygraves, Vice-Chairman Wootton Parish Council; Bob Hensher, Member Wootton Parish Council; Stuart O'Dell, Member Wootton Parish Council, Wootton Church and Poor's Land Charities; Keith Randell, Member Wootton Parish Council, Speed Watch, Wootton Vale Healthy Living Centre, Patient Participation Group; John Wheeler, Member Wootton Parish Council and Bedford Borough Councillor (including Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Fostering Panel, Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee for Primary and Secondary Education and Schools Forum), Alderman Newton's Educational Foundation, Bedford Sports Foundation, East Anglian Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, Local Authority Governor – Wootton Lower School, Robert Edward (Bob) Lunniss Charity, St. John's Hospital Trust, Vice-Chairman of Governors – Wootton Upper School, Wootton Church and Poor's Land Charities; Sue Edgar Playford, Clerk to Wootton Parish Council and Responsible Financial Officer.	
Agenda no	Agenda item title	Comments
APM21/001	Apologies for absence. Jeff Noakes, Member Wootton Parish Council, Street Watch;	Noted for the minutes.

Annual Parish Meeting Minutes 12th May 2021

Page | 1

Chairman.....

Date 20th April 2022

	Paul Quirk, Member Wootton Parish Council; Bob Wallace, Member Wootton Parish Council, Wootton Village Hall; Paula Bannell, Manager, Bizzy Bees Pre-School; Malcolm Chalmers, Speed Watch, Street Watch, Wootton Good Neighbour Scheme; Michael Gleeson, Wootton Upper School; John Killick, North Rural Community Policing Team, Bedfordshire Police; Chris Maher, Wootton Community First Response; Jo Roberts, Forest of Marston Vale; Rob and Peta Stanton, Wootton Baptist Church.	
APM21/002	Minutes of the previous meeting. <i>Minutes are published on the Wootton Parish Council website:</i> http://woottonpc.bedsparishes.gov.uk/. Members are asked to receive and adopt the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 17th April 2019.	The meeting agreed the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th April 2019 were an accurate record.
APM21/003	To receive the following reports from Wootton Parish Council. • Chairman's report. • Financial report.	It was noted both the Chairman's report and Responsible Financial Officer's financial report would be detailed in the 2021 Annual Report.
APM21/004	To receive reports from outside bodies. • Bedford Borough Council – Borough Councillor Wheeler; • Bedfordshire Police; • Forest of Marston Vale.	<u>Autism Bedfordshire</u> Refer to Appendix One. <u>Bedford Borough Council – Borough Councillor John Wheeler</u> Refer to Appendix Two. <u>Bedfordshire Police</u> Refer to Appendix Three. <u>Forest of Marston Vale</u> Refer to Appendix Four.
APM21/005	To receive reports and/or accounts from village/local organisations.	<u>Bizzy Bees</u> Refer to Appendix Five. <u>Community Speed Watch</u> Refer to Appendix Six. <u>St. Mary's Church</u> Refer to Appendix Seven.

		<u>Wootton Academy Trust</u> Refer to Appendix Eight. <u>Wootton Baptist Church</u> Refer to Appendix Nine. <u>Wootton Community First Responders</u> Refer to Appendix Ten. <u>Wootton Village Hall</u> Refer to Appendix Eleven.
APM21/006	General Parish Issues.	None.

Meeting closed at 7.06pm.

Due to ongoing Covid-19 regulations, clubs and organisations were asked not to attend in person unless absolutely necessary, and reports were requested ahead of the meeting for inclusion in these minutes.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

April 2020– March 2021



Executive Summary

The restrictions and isolation regulations put in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been particularly challenging for families with autistic members and the majority of those that we support do not understand why their lives are being impacted. They are struggling to cope with the social isolation and changes to their normal daily routines / activities, which they find extremely upsetting and many are suffering from very high levels of anxiety and stress. More than ever, they have needed access to specialist trained support to cope with and get through this difficult time.

During the periods of lockdown, we had to cancel many of our 'in person' services for autistic people and their families in order to reduce risks to our members and our staff. With the help of emergency grant funding, our office staff have been able to work from home in order to continue to provide vital support by increasing and developing our phone, email, social media and online services for autistic people in Bedfordshire. They have the knowledge and expertise to work with these vulnerable individuals and have been creative in ways to keep them active and distracted from the current crisis and uncertainty about the future.

Our objectives remain as they have always been, namely to:

- Reduce isolation and provide practical and emotional support for autistic people and their families
- Improve confidence, self-esteem, communication, social and life skills for autistic people.
- Reduce stress and improve coping abilities amongst parents and carers
- Improve parent/carer knowledge about autism, which will help them better support their autistic child and siblings.



We are tremendously proud of our team at Autism Bedfordshire, who continue to adapt our offer to meet the significant demand for our services and support. Over the last year, we have facilitated and led more sessions, through a blended offer of 'in-person' and online services, than ever in these unprecedented times and we will continue to strive to prevent crisis and create new ways to serve and support autistic people and their support networks across Bedfordshire and beyond.

Details of what we have achieved and the difference this has made to the lives of our members are outlined in this report.



HEADLINE FIGURES





SENSORY PLAY KITS



"My son loved his sensory pack."

Thanks to funding from Bedfordshire CCG, Bedford Borough, Luton Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils we were able to provide Sensory Play Kits to help support young people during Covid-19.

758

Sensory kits were sent out between April 2020 and March 2021



"Brilliant idea during lockdown."

SOCIAL STORIES

We made Social Stories to help parents support their children during the pandemic. Social stories are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. They can be themed around an individual's interests to make them more understandable and appealing.



"Thank you so much for M's Social Story. She loves it. I honestly can't thank you enough for all the help, support and contact over this difficult time."



33
Social Stories were created between April and June

"It really made 'going back to school' a little less bumpy yesterday, so thank you!"

PERSONALISED RESOURCE PACKS

We produced personalised resources for families, including activity packs, games and daily schedules. Further resources are downloadable from our website.



148

packs have been sent out





HELPLINE SERVICE

We have continued to operate our Helpline service by phone and email, and introduced a new weekly evening texting service plus bespoke 1:1 phone support for those most vulnerable and at risk.

454

Helpline contacts dealt with
between April 2020 to March 2021

"I honestly can't thank you enough for all help, support and contact over this difficult time. You have gone above and beyond expectations and I'm so grateful to you and all at Autism Beds. Thank you."

"Thank you so much for your help today. I could cry at how kind and helpful you have been"



255

hours of support given

SOCIAL MEDIA

We set up a Children's Services Covid-19 Support Group for parents and carers to support each other and share ideas, resources, and top tips. Our dedicated Children's Services team monitor the group and answer any queries or signpost to further support.

"Thank you for continuing with your efforts to make things more manageable for families like mine, it is much appreciated."



161
members
of our
Covid-19
support
group



**753 Likes since
November 2020**

Regrettably, in September 2020, we lost our Facebook page, which had over 4,300 followers. After a long three months of trying, we were finally able to get a new Facebook page up and running.



1,509 followers

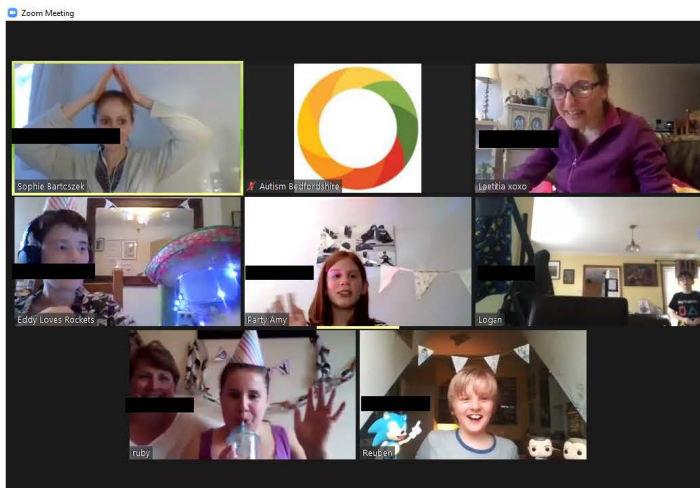


472 followers



EVENING YOUTH CLUBS 'WANTED FUN'

During the periods of lockdown, in place of our fortnightly face-to-face social groups for autistic teenagers, we established weekly online chat room/Zoom sessions facilitated by our staff. Sessions included quizzes, scavenger hunts, games, karaoke, escape rooms and competitions.



92

Zoom sessions
have been run

81

young people
enjoyed the
online sessions

226

hours of support
were provided

"I just wanted to send a thank you to the team for keeping Wanted Fun going through this craziness! S, and I'm sure everyone else, has really enjoyed the Thursdays and looked forward to every session! Thank you all for all the effort for the kids - it's been absolutely brilliant!!!
You're all superstars!!"

After restrictions were eased, we were able to re-open our in-person groups in the autumn term and again in March 2021, which was greatly welcomed by our autistic young people and their families. We also ran two bowling trips for our Central Bedfordshire groups.

25

in-person
sessions

67

young people
attended

419

hours of
support



Between January and March 2021, we launched an art course and a quiz course, both delivered via Zoom.



6

art
sessions

6

quiz
sessions

29

autistic young
people attended

162

hours of
support



Family Support and Activity Groups "Loads of Autistic Fun"

During the first lockdown, we had to cancel our face-to-face sessions of L.O.A.F. in order to reduce risks to our members and our staff. In September, we were able to re-open our 'Loads of Autistic Fun' groups in Bedford and Luton, followed by our Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard groups in October. We restricted places to 6 - 8 families, depending on what the venue could accommodate within the government safety regulations. To support as many families as possible, we split the normal 3-hour sessions into two shorter sessions. We have continued to run sessions through to March 2021.



"L.O.A.F. has been such an amazing thing for L and us as a family. L has gained so much confidence from going to L.O.A.F. and has started attending other things now. He has just started at a Wednesday club and a dance club at his school. We cannot believe he is able to access things that he could not before. We have learnt a lot from L.O.A.F. about how to make things more accessible to him and how to support him better."

46
sessions
were run

75
families

81
autistic
children

33
siblings

"It's a very welcome break at the weekend where my autistic child is happy and I get to talk to parents with similar challenges."

395 hours of support were provided

The activities are carefully planned and tailored to the abilities and interests of the children and aim to help build their confidence and self-esteem, as well as developing their social, communication and life skills. They have included arts and crafts, cooking/food preparation, sensory activities, toys and games, and plenty of outdoor play.



"I'm not sure if the staff at LOAF fully appreciate that because of the time and effort they give to our children, an invaluable support network has developed amongst the parents whereby we can share support, ideas and information with each other - and for that we will be eternally grateful."



"It is such a lovely group, where my son can actually go and feel free to play and be himself without judgement - this is priceless."



SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Following the easing of restrictions, we were delighted to be able to run an adapted programme of summer activities to support autistic children and young people and provide short breaks for their families. All staff received additional Covid-19 and PPE training and were provided with appropriate PPE equipment. Between 20th July and 7th August, 3 schemes ran in Bedford and 4 in Luton. Each scheme is specifically designed to cater for the different needs, interests, ages and abilities of the children:

39
days of
activities

- Junior Schemes: 1:1 support for autistic 3-9 year olds, including those with learning difficulties
- Holiday Clubs: 1:1 support for autistic young people aged 10-17 with learning difficulties
- Summer Fun: for 10-17 year olds with Asperger Syndrome or low support needs



80
autistic children and young
people were supported

..."he can go there & be himself, the staff just get him & are incredibly approachable, genuinely caring and kind. This year it has helped him no end with alleviating some of his anxieties - he didn't leave the house for over 3 months during lockdown and summer scheme has given him back some of his confidence to leave the house again."

Whilst we couldn't organise any trips out this year, we were able to arrange some exciting visiting entertainment. For the younger children, this included Ark Farm, Wycomb Pastures Petting Farm and Reptile World. Onsite we provided Covid-safe individual personalised learning boxes and activity areas, sensory play, giant outside games and film projections. For the Summer Fun groups, we had Rubik's Cube workshops, Abacas Netball, Cricket East and a Macdonalds delivery! Other activities included cooking, dance, quizzes, picnics, sports, films, crafts, spaghetti & marshmallow challenge, orienteering and ping pong.



976
hours of short
breaks were
enjoyed by the
families

"You need to know that this is not just a summer scheme, it is a lifeline for many families. The impact is far reaching and not always possible to quantify. It seems like a short break but as parents, we can breathe for a while for a few hours in each day we get, we don't have to worry about that child. He is having fun and I am not on the edge expecting a phone call to come and pick him up because he is with people who get him and are not fazed by him. You can't put a price on that."



FAMILY FARM DAYS

Later in the summer we ran 2 farm days at Animal Edge where families and their children could spend 1½ hours in allotted timeslots, enjoying time with the animals. In October, we arranged a another day out at the farm. In total, 31 families attended.

49

parents

32

autistic children

27

siblings

47

hours of support



"Thank you so much for organising the trip to Animal Edge farm. My child really enjoyed himself with the freedom of it not being crowded and space to be away from people when he needed a break. I got to speak to a mum who was going through similar things to myself and we have been able to swap contact details to meet up."



"It was good, I liked that the chickens and ducks were walking around with us. I would love to go again."

SPORTING ACTIVITIES



In October, in partnership with the Bedford Blues Foundation & Blues Community, we organised an 8 week long Rugby and Multisports course for autistic young people aged 10 to 17 years. We also organised a 6 week long tennis course at the Riverside Tennis Club in Bedford.



The uptake for these sporting activities was very encouraging and, although both courses had to be cut short due to the second lockdown, the young people who attended enjoyed the opportunity of partaking in activities that were safe, uncrowded and autism-friendly.

In February 2021, we organised 4 online tennis sessions which 4 young people attended.

3

rugby
sessions

25

autistic young
people supported

91

hours of
support

8

tennis
sessions

" My son really enjoyed the experience - it was nice and quiet for him so nothing else to worry about."



PARENT TRAINING

Our parent training resumed in the Autumn term, delivered via Zoom. We ran workshops on **First Steps to Supporting a Child with Autism Spectrum Conditions** for parents of newly diagnosed or undiagnosed children, and further autism training sessions covering **Autism and Behaviour, Anxiety and Behaviour, Demand Avoidance, Sensory Processing, Teenagers and Autism**, and **Women, Girls and Autism**. We offered morning and evening sessions where possible to allow as many parents/carers as possible to benefit.



144
parents / carers
attended training

8
Autism training
sessions delivered

"I really felt she [the trainer] understood the challenges."

"Thank you again for the great training and for giving your time to help parents like us, we really appreciate it."

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ONLINE CONFERENCE

Following the success of our 2019 conference, we arranged a week-long online conference for parents and carers across Bedfordshire. Talks and workshops were scheduled throughout the day between 23rd and 27th November, delivered by professionals, subject-specialist trainers and autistic adults.



Topics included:

- Mindfulness
- Impact of Covid on mental health
- Laughter therapy
- Social Communication
- Autism, Behaviour and Anxiety
- ASD assessments
- The Asperger world
- Sleep
- Autism and girls
- Pathological Demand Avoidance
- Parent Carer Forums & advice services
- Toilet training
- Understanding the SEN process
- Teen Brain matters
- Eating difficulties
- Wellbeing

"Thank you for organising such a super conference week. I was able to attend many of the lectures/workshops - all of which has increased my knowledge of autism and given me greater confidence."

"Incredible insight – thank you so much! My daughters will benefit so much from your story."

132
parents benefited

22
hours of training



TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS

We offer training to professional practitioners, mainstream services, schools and community groups to develop understanding of autism across Bedfordshire. During the first lockdown, we had to suspend our courses but were able to restart them, and rebook previously commissioned training, in the Autumn term. Between September 2020 and March 2021 we ran the following courses:



How delegates rated our training:

69% Excellent **29%** Very Good **2%** Good



Covid-19 has had a significant impact on our organisation in terms of both service provision and income. The majority of our services are traditionally face-to-face, and we have had to adapt these in order to continue to provide vital support to the autistic community during such uncertain times.

Our members, and others who had previously not reached out to us, are in need of emotional and practical support more than ever and we are having to deal with an increased number of crisis situations where we must provide remote interventions to prevent them escalating. For some individuals, this involves regular phone calls or online meetings to check how well people are coping and to provide some sort of constancy in their very disrupted routines.

Our guidance, support services and resources have been helping hundreds of people who are struggling to get through each day, as evidenced by the feedback we have received. We are reaching an exceptional number of people through these interventions and we desperately want to continue to be there for those who need our support.

The emergency grant funding that we have secured has massively helped us to keep afloat during these difficult times and we have managed to cover our costs this year. The future is still very uncertain, but we have a robust and innovative senior team who are doing everything possible to ensure that we not only get through this crisis but that we become stronger as a result of it. We have developed online services that have reached new people and we will be able to continue these once things start to return to normal. We have learned many lessons about how we can communicate with the autistic community and will incorporate these into our services, going forwards.

We wholeheartedly thank all those who have supported us during this difficult time, whether that be funders, venue providers, our technical support team, and those individuals and businesses who have fundraised and donated to us – we could not have done it without you.

Thank You



Registered Charity No: 1100722

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Borough Councillor Cllr John Wheeler's Annual Report 2020/21

This year has been the most challenging ever for Councillors and Borough employees including the operating staff, the external facing support teams for Adult and Children's care, Disability Care, Reablement support as well as supporting residents in our care homes.

Borough Hall was closed and all employees with just a few exceptions went to work from home and are largely still there.

Face to face Council meetings were cancelled for a while until a system for holding virtual committee meetings was available. The Borough's broadband was improved to support home working and every single member of the authority has had to learn to fulfil their role in a different way that is COVID safe.

The speed at which the Borough made those changes and managed to keep all services operating, from emptying bins to supporting people with needs is a credit to everyone employed in the Borough.

The political groups put aside their flags and campaigns to effect the changes in a timely and effective manner.

Here is a list of the decisions that have been made and affected the Borough this year.

Budget 2021/22

Bedford Borough Council have approved an increase in core Council Tax of 1.99% supplemented by a 1.75% Adult Social Care Precept, totalling 3.74% giving an average Band D Council Tax of £1,624.14 which was agreed at Full Council on Wednesday 3rd February.

You can find more details about their budget proposals here:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s53056/Item%2014%20-%20Revenue%20Budget%202021-22.pdf>

At Full Council on Wednesday 24th February the completed budget was finalised and included the precepts of Police & Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire, the Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority and the Parish Councils.

Bedford River Festival postponed until 2022

The Council has again postponed the River Festival until as well as the Kite and Motoring Festival until 2022.

The bi-annual River Festival was originally due to take place in the summer of 2020, but the growing pandemic meant it was postponed until 2021 the new date for the next River Festival is 23 and 24 July.

Bedford Council get money for High Street from Government HSHAZ programme

Appendix Two

Bedford will receive £1.76 million to deliver building works and a cultural programme to revive Bedford High Street. The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership, Historic England and LoveBedford are contributing funding.

Bedford Borough Council has currently earmarked 43 buildings as eligible for funding under the HSHAZ programme. Improvements to these buildings could include:

- Reinstatement of traditional shopfronts.
- Conversion of vacant floor space for retail and/or residential use.
- Repair and reinstatement of architectural details to the façade of buildings.
- Undertaking structural works to help achieve these improvements.

Bedford Council receives £180k boost from round 2 of Culture Recovery Fund

Bedford borough has received £182,349 from the Government to support iconic cultural and heritage organisations and independent cinemas as they reopen and recover from coronavirus.

This is additional to the £710,000 Bedford Borough received in Round 1 of funding in October 2020 which supported local events and venues.

Veolia Awarded Waste Contracts for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils

Veolia have been given the Bedford Borough Council waste contracts which means the Covanta incinerator site in Stewartby will begin taking in waste from both Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire too. We will continue to look for ways to mitigate the effect of this decision on those living in the vicinity of the Covanta plant and who are most likely to be concerned by the invisible particulate matter that the facility will emit. We continue to believe the Mayor and Borough Council should be looking for ways to destroy the business case for Covanta rather than using it to burn Borough waste and that of our neighbouring Council.

Controversial route 'E' for East West Rail a source of increasing concern for Borough residents

The chosen route selected for the East West Rail project - route E - continues to prove controversial and Borough Councillors received a petition this month, signed by over 1600 Bedford residents, objecting to it. The petition was debated at a heated meeting of the Borough Council on 24th February, when a number of residents from parishes in and around the route, put a series of questions to Council Leaders, and calling for the Council to "hold a full public consultation to be followed by a debate at Full Council in respect of the Council's decision to support Route E".

Many residents felt that there had been a lack of transparency around how the Mayor and Borough had come to support route E and felt that not enough information had been put in the public domain. They also demanded to know how route E, previously identified as one of the most expensive of the 5 options A-E, had suddenly become the cheapest option, without any explanation.

The subject of freight also proved controversial, with residents, parishes and Borough Councillors expressing the view that freight had been underplayed in previous discussions, and more information was required, as it forms a key part of the business case for the EWR project.

In the Council debate that followed, the Mayor's and Council leadership put forward a resolution which reconfirmed the Borough's support for a route through the town centre but didn't really address the concerns of the petitioners. Councillors representing the rural wards in the north of the Borough, those most affected by route E, objected to the motion. They feel route E will do irreparable damage to the

Appendix Two

north Bedfordshire countryside. Equally, Councillors in the south of the Borough wanted to ensure the safe delivery of Wixams station and wanted an EWR route that would not jeopardise this. Ultimately, the Mayor's resolution was not unanimously supported.

The EWR Consultation has now opened, the Conservative Group have called for the deadline to be extended and for a number of changes to be made to the consultation.

There are controversies over their 'emerging preferred option' in that it puts up to 97 properties under threat in the north of Bedford, it involves laying 2 new tracks into Bedford Station and increasing traffic congestion in the Midland Road, Queens Park, Ashburnham Road area. The residents in the properties effected were informed the day before the consultation that their property may be subject to a CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) in the future.

You can view all documents and respond on their website found below. There are also some dates for virtual events. We strongly urge you to respond before it closes on 9 June: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation>

Boundary Commission update

The Boundary Commission has changed its timetable for its recommendations. There will now be more draft recommendations released on 11 May for 8 weeks of further consultation. The final recommendations will then be released on 31 August.

Bedford Borough Contract with Fusion

After we came out of the first lockdown, Fusion refused to open their services until they were given money they were not entitled to by Bedford Borough Council. After receiving this the country locked down again and Fusion run services have remained closed until Monday 12 April.

The contract remains controversial, there are concerns from residents about the cleanliness, maintenance and quality of service provided.

Wootton News

As I write this report things are looking a bit better on the pandemic front, shops, hairdressers and some sports facilities are now open and the schools are all back. We still have a long way to go and we still need to take care but hope is on the horizon. As I mentioned in the Wootton Newsletter – a big thank you to everyone in the village who helped out during this terrible time looking after the vulnerable in Wootton.

We are now getting back to some normality at Borough (if Borough can ever be normal!). Meetings are starting to take place outdoors and projects put on hold are now been started. The paths around Fields Road on the new estate are now nearly completed and the crossing should be started soon by the surgery. The infrastructure within the Berryfields estate remains unadopted and looks like it will not be adopted till later this year. The pavements along Payne Road, Monoux Road and Keeley Lane have all been put forward for resurfacing by Bedford Borough Council, along with resurfacing for Church Road and the first section of Cranfield Road, as you leave the village. The shops are now all open and seem to be doing a good trade, the Wootton industrial park is seeing further ground works ahead of further development and two more units will be built by Amazon soon. I will keep you updated via the Wootton Newsletter regarding further developments.

Last year I used most of my ward funding to help students and their families during the pandemic by providing help to purchase school uniforms, provide extra tuition, provide talking books for the lower

Appendix Two

school and giving financial assistance for meals for students and their families. I would also like to thank Wootton Poor's Land Charity for its help, along with other helpers and village organisations.

I have also enabled bulb planting to be carried out at the entrance to Lorraine Road cemetery – the display this year was lovely.

Take care.

Borough Councillor John Wheeler
07913 409433
john.wheeler@bedford.gov.uk
www.facebook.com/cllrjohnwheeler

Bedfordshire Police Annual Report 2020/21



- 1) The officers that cover the Wootton are PC 245 Amanda HARVEY and PCSO 6753 James DANCER. The Sgt for the North Rural Community Team is PS 5892 John KILLICK.
- 2) The current Community Priority for Wootton and surrounding villages is Vehicle Crime, which came into effect as of the 1st April. This will be in place for the next 3 months. This will focus on Theft of Motor Vehicle, Theft from Motor Vehicle and Vehicle Interference. We are hoping as the lockdown restrictions ease, that we can arrange some face to face engagements regarding vehicle crime and safety / prevention.
- 3) The previous Community priority was around Burglary. Glad to report that across Bedford Borough there was a decline in Burglaries from April 2020 to March 2021.
- 4) As you can appreciate I am sure, the main focus of the team's work has been around Covid and ensuring compliance with the government guidelines over the last 6 months or so.
- 5) There is a day of action being planned in Wootton in the coming weeks (which will be communicated in advance of this taking place. Essentially this will be a day where a number of resources will be in Wootton looking at identified areas of school, completing door knocks and on hi-viz patrol to engage with local residents and identify any concerns.
- 6) In terms of Crime and ASB over the last 12 months (01/04/2020 to 01/04/2021)

CRIME STATS -

01/04/2019 to 31/03/2020	270 reported crimes. 32 of these were reported crimes from the A421 which falls within the Wootton Ward.	01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021	295 reported crimes. 43 of these were reported crimes from the A421 which falls within the Wootton Ward.
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Appendix Three

ASB STATS -

01/04/2019 to 31/03/2020	72 reported issues	01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021	106 reported issues (Covid would have had an impact on this)
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- 7) Please could the residents be encouraged to follow the following social media pages for updates relating to Wootton with work completed by the team and safety / crime prevention advice –

<https://twitter.com/NorthBedsPolice>

https://www.facebook.com/NorthBedsPoliceRural/?ref=py_c

- 8) Any questions for the team and I please send to
CommunityNorthBedfordRural@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

Forest of Marston Vale Annual Report 2020/21

The past year has been challenging for everyone, and Covid put a stop to many of our usual activities. Many of our staff were furloughed for parts of the year, and our volunteer activities ground to a halt.

There were no fetes and festivals, no events, no walks or talks.

However, we were still able to meet (via Zoom of course) to hold to Community Fund Panel meeting, and Wootton Good Neighbour Scheme was awarded funding to continue its great work.

We also, with the help of funds from our volunteers, were able to buy a baler. This will be used to bale up the old tree tubes which are recyclable, and we have found a company who will take them. So, when we had a brief window of opportunity, we were able to have a day with the volunteers in Shocott Spring, collecting tree tubes which had come away from the trees. These were all baled up, and will be taken for recycling when we have enough. This is an important step towards removing the plastic which is left behind from tree planting - something that the forestry industry has been trying to solve for years. It still isn't the perfect solution, and we continue to work with innovators to find biodegradable alternatives to what's currently on the market.

The really exciting news for us this year is that the Forest of Marston Vale is part of a new programme – **Trees for Climate** – which will see trees planted in Community Forests across the country over the next 4 years. Over 500 hectares per year will be planted across England's ten Community Forests, from Yorkshire to Somerset, backed by £12.1 million of investment, announced by government last December. This will also build the pipeline of projects for community planting in future years.

When mature, the trees will eventually store over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, playing an important role in the meeting the government's 'net zero emissions by 2050' target. The project will also reduce flood risk, increase sustainable UK grown timber, provide more places for nature and biodiversity to thrive, and increase people's access to and enjoyment of woodland. The funding will also create new jobs and secure existing ones within the forestry and environmental sector, helping to boost local economies as part of a green recovery, and bringing invaluable benefits to people's health and wellbeing.

The fund will help us deliver the English portion of the government's manifesto commitment to increase tree planting to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025, alongside peatland restoration and nature recovery.

This year was challenging for everyone involved in planting across the country, but the Forest of Marston Vale achieved its target of almost 20ha – mainly with the help of volunteers and through contractors. Most of this was phase 1 of our new site near Houghton House, which will be planted over 3 years. We planted over 17000 trees this season, and as the site matures it will provide a beautiful 'buffer' to the existing ancient woodland of Kings Wood.

Other schemes were delivered at local schools and with local landowners.

We will be working with local landowners to support them with woodland creation and tree planting, and would urge anyone interested to get in touch.

Bizzy Bees Annual Report 2020/21



Bizzy Bees Pre-School CIO
Memorial Hall Bedford Road
Wootton
Bedford
MK43 9JB

Tel: 01234 767785

Website: www.bizzybeespreschool.org

Email: bizzybeespre_school@btconnect.com

Charity Number: 1172751

Ofsted: EY556019

Dedicated in the Safeguarding, Protection and Promotion of Children's Welfare

Hello everyone

What a challenging year we have all had dealing with COVID19 both in our personal and working lives. Like so many others the setting went into lockdown on the 24th of March 2020 due to parents not wanting to send their children to Pre-School. We used the furlough system for some staff and others worked tirelessly at home keeping in contact with all our families and staff members and putting together an operational plan for the setting following the ever-changing government guidance. On 8th June 2021, we re-opened only for critical workers and those children classed as vulnerable by Bedford Borough. We had a very stringent plan in place to keep everyone safe, which we did do, and up until the present day have had no positive cases in our setting. After the summer break 2020 we returned in September allowing all children to return to the setting, this went well, and children and parents were happy to be back. After the Christmas holiday when the virus peaked once again, we opened to just our critical and vulnerable children for the first 2 weeks in January, and then had all children able to return. We did have some parents choose to keep their children off until after the February break, but they have all now returned, and the setting is running normally with all our protective measures in place.

We are now testing all staff members twice weekly, getting regular deliveries of the tests, and COVID19 has now become part of everyday life for us all. The setting continues to thrive, we have been full since January 2021, and have a healthy waiting list which continues to grow, for September 2021. We have a wonderful staffing team and committee who work tirelessly to provide the best possible environment for our children and families. COVID19 has of course had an effect on the setting over the last year. We did lose income from our private payers, and the furlough scheme was not the same for us being able to claim 80% like other businesses due to us receiving the government funding. We have now managed to bounce back, and hope that moving forward we can continue to operate without further lockdowns.

The Memorial Hall building remains in good order, we have of course been the only ones to use it in the last year so we have looked after it well with no issues from the public whatsoever I'm happy to report.

Since I joined the setting in September 2018, we have grown from strength to strength building the Pre-School back up after near closure in July 2018. We are enormously proud to be able to offer the

Appendix Five

community a safe, nurturing environment for our children, and have a good networking system with other settings based in Wootton. At the end of term (July) I will be leaving the setting due to family commitments, but will be around to support staff members stepping up to the role of the management team.

Thank you, and good evening.

Paula Bannell
Manager

Community Speedwatch Annual Report 2020/21

During this pandemic and recent lockdowns there has been little opportunity for your dedicated Speedwatch Team - Keith Randell, Les Dick, Graham Ward and myself - to be able to carry out any patrols. Since then we have seen average speed cameras installed down Fields Road and the results have confirmed that the cameras were necessary as several offenders were caught. We are very grateful to the parish council and in particular to John Wheeler for ensuring that the road surface was improved and the cameras installed and we look forward to the cameras being installed down Cranfield Road where we carried out a patrol at the end of March. During that hour we caught 5 offenders.

April was so cold that we delayed the next patrol until May 6th which was carried out along Bedford Road between Keeley Corner and Irongate Corner. – heading out of the village. We caught 2 offenders but did notice that many cars put their brakes on swiftly when they caught sight of us!

We are very pleased with the improved situation on Fields Road but are aware that some motorists now feel that they can exceed the speed limit elsewhere in the village! We are still a very small team (although Wootton is now a large village) and could do with some more volunteers! Our friends in Elstow who borrow our SID (Speed Indicator Device) have three times as many volunteers! If you feel that you could help us out please get in touch with Juliet Wright – Juliet.Wright@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

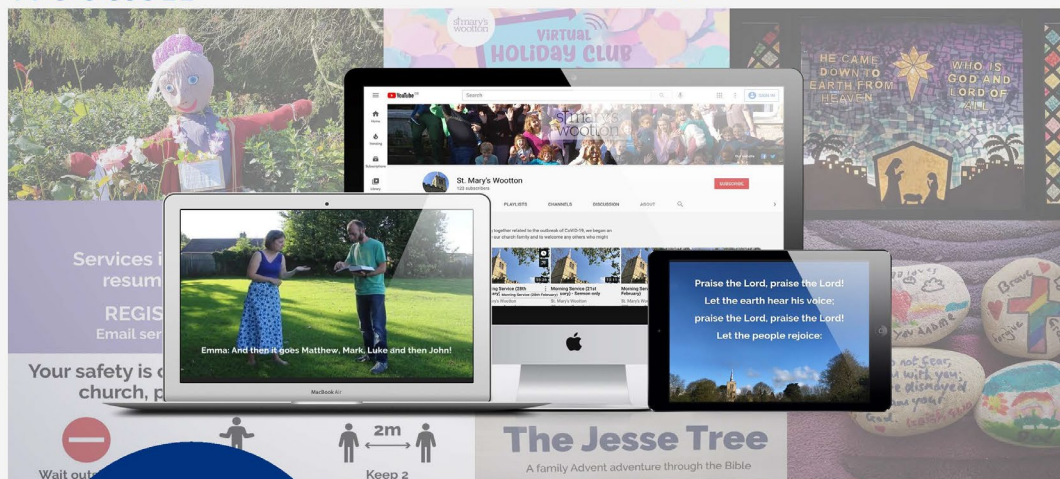
We should love to have your help.

Malcolm Chalmers
Community Speedwatch Co-ordinator

St. Mary's Annual Report 2020/21

st mary's
wootton

Knowing Jesus;
making Jesus known to all



Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2020

The Parochial Church Council of St Mary the Virgin,
Wootton, Bedfordshire
Registered Charity 1150817

St. Mary's Church

c/o The Vicarage | Church Rd | Wootton | Bedford | MK43 9HF
01234 765375/768391 | office@stmaryswootton.org.uk | www.stmaryswootton.org.uk

Mission Statement (what we aim to do) Knowing Jesus; making Jesus known to all

Towards 2024 *(adopted March 2020)*

St Mary's 2020-2024:

Our vision is unchanged: to be a church family of disciples of Jesus Christ, rooted in the Bible and prayer, committed to making disciples, to holiness of life and to every-member service; a family of loving welcome, passionate proclamation, glad service, global heart and sacrificial change.*



Our five year goal is simple: to double in size

Our priority is clear: to develop our life as a church towards this goal.

Our strategy is threefold:

- to develop our facilities for growth
- to establish PCC-led teams to support ministries for growth
- to launch at least one new congregation
all in dependence on the Lord in prayer

Values Statement (what matters to us)

We believe that we are reconciled to God the Father through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and therefore we value:

The Bible	as the written word of God and our supreme authority in following Jesus in the whole of life.
Prayer	as the prime expression of faith in Jesus and of our dependence on God's loving grace and sovereign power in all things.
Church	as a family of wholehearted worshippers and disciples of Jesus Christ committed to mutual encouragement, care, and accountability.
Evangelism	as the proclamation of the good news of God's salvation in Christ for all people
Service	as a family of God's people caring for people in Wootton and Stewartby and beyond with the love of Christ.

Identity Statement



We are...

Christ's church:	the church is the bride and body of Jesus Christ; it is through him alone, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, that we know God; it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we worship and serve Christ; and it is Christ's future return which is our hope and motivation for life.
A local church:	a full and authentic expression of the universal church, called into being and sustained by God's word. We have a specific responsibility to proclaim and demonstrate the love of God in Christ among the people of the parish of Wootton. We are also called to involvement with the world-wide mission of the whole church.
An Anglican church:	while we welcome Christians of all backgrounds, our permanent and most visible connection is with the Church of England. We accept and uphold its founding documents (The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal) as authentic expressions of orthodox Christian belief. We are committed to supporting and encouraging biblical faith and practice in the Anglican Communion, both within and beyond the diocese of St. Albans.
An evangelical church:	we recognise the convictions of historic evangelicalism as crystallising and expressing the kernel of orthodox Christianity, including: the supreme authority of Scripture; the universal nature of human sin; the grace of God, seen above all in the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ; and the gift of justification and new life in Christ, received and enjoyed only through repentance and faith. We value the examples, among others, of the sixteenth-century reformers, the eighteenth-century evangelists, and the nineteenth-century social reformers. We are committed to gospel partnership with evangelical mission agencies, as well as with our patron, the Martyrs' Memorial and Church of England Trust, and the Church Pastoral Aid Society.

* Vision Statement (what we aim to become)



One body of wholehearted worshipping disciples, ever more deeply rooted in the Bible & prayer, growing together in holiness and every-member ministry to become a family of:

- **loving welcome**, caring for one another with the love of Jesus Christ nurturing, teaching and training one another for lives of holiness and love
- **passionate proclamation**, committed to reaching the people of Wootton, Stewartby and beyond, with the vital good news of Jesus Christ for a lost world
- **glad service**, dedicated to being salt and light for Jesus Christ in the world
- **global heart**, BOTH prayerfully and practically engaged in the worldwide mission of the church, AND training and sending men and women into gospel ministry within and beyond the parish
- **sacrificial change**, giving generously of ourselves, our money, and our talents to realise this vision

Aims and Purposes

St Mary's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, Canon Peter Ackroyd, in promoting the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical in the ecclesiastical parish of Wootton, which comprises the two civil parishes of Wootton and Stewartby. The PCC is also responsible for maintenance of the Church, Church Hall, and an investment property.

Objectives and Activities

The primary objective of the Parochial Church Council is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. To this end the PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship in the parish church, to providing opportunities for adults and young people to hear the gospel and grow in discipleship, to caring pastorally and practically for people in need, and to supporting Christian mission within and beyond the parish, indeed globally. The PCC regularly reviews the effectiveness of the church's ministry in the light of both its own Mission Action Plan, and the three themes of the Living God's Love vision of the Diocese of St Albans: Going Deeper into God, Transforming Communities, and Making New Disciples. In planning and overseeing the mission of the church, the incumbent and PCC consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion.

As the pages of this report record, the shape of the life and mission of the church during 2020 was dramatically altered by the coronavirus pandemic. At the beginning of the year, the PCC had anticipated renewing its Mission Action Plan for a further five years, with a prayerful aspiration to see a doubling in the size of our worshipping congregations. The impact of the pandemic on every area of church life quickly made apparent the need to pivot to supporting members of the church and community through the isolation and trauma of a public health emergency which dramatically curtailed both individual freedoms and communal life, including public worship. In the circumstances, MAP renewal was deferred until long-term planning could sensibly resume.

The PCC Vision Statement continues to be:

St Mary's will be one body of wholehearted worshipping disciples, ever more deeply rooted in the Bible and prayer, growing together in holiness and every-member ministry to become a family of:

- **loving welcome**, caring for one another with the love of Jesus Christ
- **passionate proclamation**, committed to reaching the people of Wootton, Stewartby and beyond, with the vital good news of Jesus Christ for a lost world.
- **glad service**, dedicated to being salt and light for Jesus Christ in the world
- **global heart** both prayerfully and practically engaged in the worldwide mission of the church and training and sending men and women into gospel ministry within and beyond the parish
- **sacrificial change** giving generously of ourselves, our money, and our talents to realise this vision.

To facilitate the ministry of the church the PCC makes a priority of maintaining the fabric of both the church building and the church hall, which is on a separate site. Maintenance of the churchyards, which are closed, is the responsibility of Wootton Parish Council.

Achievements and performance

Worship and Prayer

At the outset of 2020 the church offered two Sunday morning services, at 9am and at 10.30am, and a monthly Sunday evening Prayer Service.

Following the announcement of a national lockdown in early March, public worship in church buildings – including weddings and funerals – was prohibited by law. From Sunday 22 March, a weekly recorded service was broadcast on YouTube. Public worship was permitted to restart in July and on 16 July a weekly morning service resumed, including a monthly observance of the Lord's Supper, subject to significant limitations on numbers and activity in order to comply with government and Church of England guidance on 'social distancing' and infection control. Although congregational singing was not permitted, refreshments could not be served, and space did not permit youth and children's activities within the church building, the autumn saw up to around fifty attending church in person. Online recorded services continued each week, and once again became the sole opportunity to share in local worship during a further month-long lockdown in November.

Sunday ministry online also included 'Zoom Coffee' at 11.30am weekly and a regular evening online Prayer Gathering, initially weekly and then fortnightly.

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Appendix Seven

Newcomers to church continued to be welcomed both physically and online. And though large-scale services in person were precluded by the need for social-distancing, with Christmas and other significant events such as Harvest and Remembrance hence significantly reduced in scale, opportunities to connect in new ways were devised. In the autumn, a Harvest Scarecrow Trail in the church yard enabled families safely to view display and poems by church members, while at Christmas a Churchyard Nativity Trail was provided. A further much appreciated community venture was Christmas Windows, with over sixty households across the village of Wootton volunteering to decorate and illuminate a window of their home with inspiration from the words of Christmas songs and carols.

Zero adults and two children were baptised during the year. Two weddings were celebrated in church and St Mary's clergy officiated at seventeen funeral services for present or former parish residents at St Marys, Stewartby United Church, or Bedford Crematorium.

For a while over the summer, the church was open weekly for private prayer.

Families, children and young people

From March to September face-to-face children and youth work, either in church or mid week groups, was not permitted due to Covid-19 but the PCC oversaw several other initiatives. Restrictions were eased slightly from September meaning some face to face activities could resume.

Initiatives during 2020/21:

- Weekly Church at Home resources with activities, teaching, game and prayer suggestions emailed to approximately 30 families.
- All age online services and all age slots within the online services.
- Virtual Holiday Club including aerobics, memory verse, prayer crafts, songs, jokes and frolics, bedtime stories with 3 videos a day averaging 90 views per day plus a Facebook group
- Special event services online for Good Friday and Christingle.
- Jesse Tree family devotion.
- Zoom Pathfinders, J@M and Sunday groups.
- StoryTime Zoom.
- Daily reading plan for families-Day by Day (Jesus Storybook Bible & Meals with Jesus.)
- Offered 1:1 Bible Study to young people.
- Scarecrow Trail in the Churchyard.
- Interactive Walkabout Nativity Trail-Journey to Bethlehem.
- In person socially distanced Pathfinders and J@M in the church.
- In person Sunday Children's groups, socially distanced. Explorers & Pathfinders together outside.
- Weekly email to families with encouragement, signposting to resources and material for families to use.
- Church at Home YouTube playlist for all age worship songs.
- Encouraged engagement with outside events such as Sorted Nano & Sorted, Keswick Convention, Getty Family Hymn Sing, Worship for Everyone-Family at 4 and Virtual Ventures.



Youth and children's ministry has been delivered flexibly in a variety of ways. With many families unable to attend church and face to face youth work not permitted, we developed Church at Home and encouraged and equipped parents in discipling their children. Technology was utilised in new ways such as Zoom for virtual mid-week and Sunday groups, pre-recorded videos for a virtual Holiday Club presenting different elements of our usual Holiday Club. At Christmas a walkabout interactive nativity was held in the churchyard bringing the nativity story to families in the community in a very different way.

Discipleship, Pastoral Care and Training

During the pandemic Growth Groups continued to be the main vehicle for the pastoral support of congregation members, meeting on Zoom. Five Growth Groups met during the year, weekly in the evening, to study the Bible, pray, and support one another. Leaders met termly to receive training and support, and to pray together. One of our groups for older members was unable to meet online, but a small group of people have kept weekly contact by telephone.

The PCC continued to prioritise training in the understanding and skills of Christian ministry attending Zoom training courses where possible.

The monthly Men's Breakfast met in person when permitted and on Zoom, and regularly attracted up to eight men for mutual support and encouragement.

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Appendix Seven

A number of church members attended the Virtually Keswick Convention in July.

A Pastoral Coordination Team was set up early in 2020 and consists of five members. This group has met fortnightly to support the clergy in caring for church members and their families at times of sickness, hospitalisation, infirmity and isolation particularly during the pandemic, when we have been unable to meet as a congregation face to face.

Mission and outreach

St Mary's mission is summarised on its publicity, website and noticeboards as 'Knowing Jesus; making Jesus known to all'. PCC pursued this mission through a range of activities.

Since March we have been producing YouTube weekly Sunday services which regularly attract an average of two hundred views. At Remembrance there were three hundred and seventy views, as the community was unable to remember together in person. At Christmas, again, an average of two hundred viewed our online Christingle, Carols by Candlelight & Christmas Eve Family Carol services. We have sought to keep in touch with the village through social media and at Christmas we saw increased traffic due to our 'Christmas Windows' Facebook page.

Our monthly Lunch Club for the over 50's was unable to run from March. However, Norma Smith and Jenny Roffey have continued to keep in touch with members.

Other outreach events that took place in 2020 included a virtual summer holiday club and a Harvest scarecrow trail. We were also able to provide a bedtime Christmas story video 'The Christmas Promise' by Alison Mitchell to Wootton Lower School read by our Youth and Children's Worker, Emma Hearn.

Mission Partnerships

The PCC tithes its income from regular giving to support Christian mission beyond the parish according to its agreed Global Mission Policy.

In 2020 mission funding was given to:

- Festive - for the ministry of Karen Jones working with sixth forms and further education colleges to spread the gospel.
- IMPACT – Christian workers supporting local schools.
- Jude and YP Gayet involved in church planting and youth ministry in Belgium.
- Bishop Alf and Hilary Cooper with CMS in Chile.
- Speak Life – UK evangelistic ministry (Director: Glen Scrivener)
- The Church Pastoral Aid Society

A donation of £1000 was made to Open Doors (UK) in support of it's work with the persecuted church. Church members contributed to the ministry of Operation Christmas Child at Christmas (Samaritan's Purse) and donations were encouraged for SMART Prebend Centre for the homeless. Throughout the year church members supported the work of Bedford Foodbank through a collection point in the church.

Church buildings

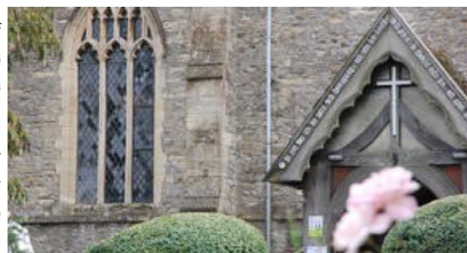
One of the objectives of the PCC is to maintain the church, church hall and grounds as well as a house which has in past years accommodated the curate.

Many works were required this year to ensure the church and church hall remained safe when being reopened after closure, and when open to ensure they were Covid safe.

Equipment was installed in church to enable live streaming of church services. Approval was sought for installing a phone line into the church for a broadband connection. It is hoped this will be installed in 2021.

Progress towards the restoration of the North Porch, was further delayed awaiting a bat survey, this was a condition of the faculty and could not be completed due to Covid restrictions. Works are hoped to commence in 2021.

The PCC-owned property at 9 Studley Road was let for this year in order to support the renting of a more suitable property for the curate and his family.



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Ecumenical Relationships

The PCC aims to strengthen Christian witness and service in the community through membership of Wootton and Stewartby Churches. A Lenten Prayer service was hosted by St Mary's on the 8th March.

Clergy attend bi-monthly prayer meetings for leaders of Bedford Churches in sympathy with the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Alliance, of which St Marys is a corporate member.

St Mary's Preschool

On account of the coronavirus pandemic, 2020 proved to be one of the most challenging of the more than fifty years since the PCC opened a daily Play Group (now Preschool) to serve the local community.



The Preschool opened the year with forty children on the roll. Following the introduction of a national lockdown towards the end of March, Preschool closed and most staff were furloughed (under the UK Government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme). Support for families and children was maintained through email and social media. Educational provision restarted on site on 16 June, and continued in the autumn, with an initial thirty-five children attending. The Preschool manager is Tracey Kerins. Oversight of the Preschool is delegated to a management group was appointed by PCC comprising the Preschool Manager and her deputy Lina Rosato, and three members of PCC: Peter Ackroyd, Pauline Kendall and Dorothy Teh. In October, Amanda Newton succeeded Dorothy Teh as a PCC member on this group.

Holywell Church of England School, Cranfield

The PCC nominates a number of governors at Holywell School. Continuing Wootton PCC Foundation Governors were: Pauline Kendall (Chair of Governors), Martin Sanders, Fiona Frossell and Isabel Turner.

Deanery Synod

St Marys was represented in Deanery Synod by its licensed clergy and three representatives of the laity. Pauline Kendall served throughout the year as Lay Co-Chair of the Synod. During the year the Synod met four times; except for its February meeting, all these were held online. As well as reviewing progress in implementing the Deanery Mission Action Plan, and engaging with proposals for the re-organisation of ministry in the south of the deanery, Synod heard presentations from external speakers on the following topics: Modern Slavery (Kevin Wollmer, priest-missioner St Peter de Merton & Bedford Town Centre), Supporting Christians in FE & VI Form colleges (Karen Jones, Festive), and Faith and Artificial Intelligence (Canon Tim Bull, Director of Ministry and Diocesan Director of Ordinands). Reports were given on the proceedings of the Diocesan Board of Finance and Diocesan and General Synods. During the year Canon Richard Hibbert's second term of office as Area Dean came to an end; he was succeeded by Revd Sam Cappleman. Ann Mason stood down after many years service as Secretary to the Synod; her successor is Kathryn Hughes.

Volunteers

The PCC would like to record its thanks to all those who serve in the church as volunteers in different capacities in particular, including the church wardens Hazel Sanders and Ant Hall who have worked tirelessly in serving the congregation in the last twelve months. The PCC would also like to thank the Treasurer Phil Wainwright for his financial advice to the PCC and ably supported by Alison Reed Thomsett the Book Keeper. The ability of the PCC to offer a varied programme of activities to meet a diverse range of people is only achieved by the generous giving of time, talents and funds from many members of the congregation.

Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a registered charity. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St Mary's the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (the vicar), licensed clergy, church wardens, the reader and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the Electoral Roll of the church and stand for election to the PCC. A revision of the Electoral Roll took place in September 2020. Following the revision the roll numbered 124. At the end of the year, the total was 123.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. The Treasurer (Phil Wainwright) gives a monthly update on the current finances. New members receive initial training into the workings of the PCC.

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Appendix Seven

The PCC met 9 times in the year. Sub committees are formed that deal with particular aspects of parish life. Training on safeguarding arranged by the Diocese have been attended by members of the PCC, as well as by leaders of young people's groups and others as required under the church's safeguarding policy and by the Church of England.

During 2020 Tomira Nawrocka retired as Parish Safeguarding Officer and Kate Wilson took over the role, with Emma Hearn and Pauline Kendall as deputy safeguarding officers. Safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC agenda.

The Standing Committee meets once a month this is made up of the vicar, wardens, treasurer and secretary. The role of the Standing Committee is to prioritise items for the PCC meeting, discuss and make decisions on items of a confidential nature or look in more detail on matters that have been brought to the PCC.

The PCC employs a part-time administrator, part-time Youth and Families Worker, the staff of the Preschool, and a church hall cleaner. The PCC and staff work in partnership with teams of volunteer helpers, appointed by the PCC and the vicar.

St Mary's continued to have responsibility within the diocese of St Albans as a training parish for first-post curates. Revd Phillip Young, with his wife Louise and sons Teddy and Wilfie, is the current curate in training.

Jim Hignett serves as a licensed Reader and attends regular diocesan events.

The PCC and Administrator comply with the recent General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regarding the privacy of church member's information.

Financial Review

Total receipts of unrestricted giving and income amounted to £138,751 and restricted giving totalled £22,309. We were able to reclaim £21,764 from Gift Aid eligible donations. These combined with other receipts gave the church a total income of £161,061. This was approximately £35,000 less than in 2019 but this was largely due to a large one off donation (£45,000) received in 2019. The level of income was extremely encouraging bearing in mind the pressures put upon the congregation as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

Approximately £106,000 was spent on the Christian ministry at St. Mary's. This figure includes £62,335 in Parish Share which was paid in full and which pays for clergy salaries, pensions and housing costs as well as supporting the mission of the diocese. Our total expenditure for the year totalled £151,292, a decrease of just over £20,000 from the previous year.

Overall, the church finished 2020 with a surplus of income over expenditure of £9,769. This surplus was made possible by a receipt of £11,000 restricted income into the Choir & Organ Fund. Our income exceeded our budget and our expenditure was close to the 2020 budget of £150,600. Some savings were made possible as a result of the pandemic and this enabled us to invest in the infrastructure to facilitate the future live streaming of church services.

Reserves Policy

Throughout 2020 we maintained our reserve fund at £10,000. This allows us to meet our obligations in terms of staff salaries and church running costs for a period of three months. Our cash reserves remain strong with a total of £254,105 on deposit at the end of 2020, with approximately £195,000 of this being restricted to expenditure on the fabric of the church building. During 2020 we have continued to operate two current accounts with our Metro account becoming the main account while we continue to maintain the NatWest account to ensure no account has funds exceeding £85,000 (Financial Services Compensation Scheme limit). In terms of a deposit account we continue to invest in the CBF Church of England Funds.



Appendix Seven

Parochial Church Council

The PCC met nine times, including online meetings using the Zoom platform for most of the year. Some of the work of the PCC is carried out through the following sub-committees: Standing, Finance, Youth Council, Pre-School Management.

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, PCC oversaw the substantial challenges which this brought to mission and ministry. Decisions made in online meetings were subsequently ratified by electronic correspondence.

In addition to PCC finances and maintenance and development of church buildings, the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults was a standing item on the agenda of every meeting. The Parish Safeguarding Officer has the right to attend whenever they deem it necessary, and is invited to attend at least three meetings every year as a matter of course.

Issues discussed during the year included: Vision for Growth 2019-2020; evangelism & outreach; administration of the communion cup by growth group leaders; proceedings of deanery and diocesan synods, and meetings of PCC committees; support for mission partners, mission and relief agencies, and the persecuted church; a bi-monthly church family magazine; attendance at training and other events including a ReNew St Albans meeting hosted by St Marys on 8 March; the relaunch of bell-ringing; arrangements including risk assessments for the opening of church for private prayer (June) and resumption of in-person services in July; provision of equipment and broadband access to enable services to be livestreamed; recovery from coronavirus restrictions; pastoral support for isolating congregation and community members; establishment of a hardship fund; re-organisation of the prayer chain; Christmas ministry & outreach; appointment of PCC officers & working groups following the APCM; 2021 PCC & Preschool budgets.

PCC policies reviewed during the year included: Safeguarding, Health and Safety; Livestreaming; Global Missions

The revision of the church's detailed Mission Action Plan, including the establishment of PCC ministry teams, and consideration of launching further services/congregations was suspended.

Support of Stewartby United Church

Ministry at Stewartby United Church, a local ecumenical project, is provided under the terms of a Sharing Agreement in which the Church of England and the Methodist Church are the remaining active partners. Licensed ministers and congregation members from St Mary's have continued to support Stewartby in leading services when Stewartby church has been able to meet in person during 2020. At Christmas two Carols by Candlelight services were held on successive weekends led by Peter Ackroyd & Phillip Young.



St. Mary's Playgroup
Income and Expenditure
January to December 2020

EXPENDITURE January - December 2020	
Salaries January - December 2020	72081.26
Pension	3021.48
Employers National Insurance/TAX	12370.99
Church Hall Rent + Floor Donation	5281.25
PLA Membership Fee + Ofsted	35.00
Equipment and supplies	3372.16
Uniform	1044.41
Milkbar	671.22
Photo developing	195.92
Staff Training	63.00
Petty Cash	1.50
DBS	52.60
Fee refunds	534.00
Cash in Hand - 31 December 2020	9.05
Balance in Bank - 31 December 2020	28839.84
TOTAL	127573.68
INCOME January - December 2020	
Cash in Hand - 1 January 2020	10.55
Balance at Bank - 1 January 2020	26048.83
Received from Fees	11897.45
Received from Early Years Funding LEA + SEN	82981.46
Government Grant	6419.83
Donations	215.56
TOTAL	127573.68

Manager/Treasurer: Tracey AHS Date: 24/01/2021
TRACEY KERINS

Deputy Manager: L. Rosato Date: 24/01/2021
LINA ROSATO

Auditor: L. Rees Date: 1.2.2021
LESLEY REES

St. Mary the Virgin Parochial Church Council Independent Examiner's Report of accounts for January to December 2020

Independent Examiner's report to the Parochial Church Council
of St Mary the Virgin, Wootton, Bedford
Charity Commission no. 1150817

This report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended **31 December 2020**, which are set out on pages 1 to 4 is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 ('the Regulations') and **s.145 of the Charities Act 2011** ('the Act').

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and the examiner

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit requirement of the Regulations and **s.144(2)** of the Act does not apply. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the terms of the Regulations.

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under **s.145(5)(b)** of the Act and to be found in the Church guidance, 2006 edition. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- i. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section **130** of the Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act and the Regulations have not been met; or
- ii. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed Lynne Richardson Independent Examiner – L. Richardson FCCA

Date _____

Signed on behalf of PCC P.M. Ackroyd Incumbent – P.M. Ackroyd

Date 15/3/21

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St Mary's Church, Wootton

Balance Sheet detailed
To 31st December 2020

	As at 31/12/2020	As at 31/12/2019
Endowment assets		
1509: Wootton Armstrong Fund	1,513.06	1,415.32
1510: Wootton Church Cottages	24,331.57	22,759.94
Total Fixed assets	25,844.63	24,175.26
Current assets		
1501: NatWest Current	117,884.30	119,687.42
1503: CBF Capital Fund	124,095.69	111,853.60
1504: CBF Studley Road	1.71	1.71
1508: Cash Book	—	—
1511: Metro Current	12,123.73	12,744.38
Total Current assets	254,105.43	244,287.11
Liabilities		
1650: Loans for Stonework	—	—
6699: Agency collections	197.50	148.59
Total Liabilities	197.50	148.59
Net Asset surplus (deficit)	279,752.56	268,313.78
Reserves		
Excess / (deficit) to date	9,769.41	23,899.90
Z01: Starting balances	268,313.78	240,601.15
Z02: Gains/(losses) on investment assets	1,669.37	3,812.73
Total Reserves	279,752.56	268,313.78

Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted	29,835.39	35,611.69
Restricted	224,072.54	208,508.11
Endowment	25,844.63	24,175.26
Total	279,752.56	268,313.78

St Mary's Church, Wootton
Statement of Financial Activities
For the period from 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Incoming resources					
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources	119,699.55	15,386.90	—	135,086.45	169,341.66
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects	19,088.25	—	—	19,088.25	17,331.12
Activities for generating funds	—	—	—	—	—
Investment income	—	1,203.88	—	1,203.88	1,507.84
Other incoming resources	(36.00)	5,718.33	—	5,682.33	7,611.50
Total income	138,751.80	22,309.11	—	161,060.91	195,792.12
Resources used					
Grants payable in furtherance of charity's objects	9,720.00	—	—	9,720.00	11,000.00
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects	128,477.12	7,062.53	—	135,539.65	145,864.84
Support costs	3,210.06	—	—	3,210.06	12,344.00
Expenditure on managing-administering the charity	2,821.79	—	—	2,821.79	2,683.38
Total expenditure	144,228.97	7,062.53	—	151,291.50	171,892.22
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer	(5,477.17)	15,246.58	—	9,769.41	23,899.90
Transfers					
Gross transfers between funds - in	9,369.77	6,842.18	—	16,211.95	32,032.04
Gross transfers between funds - out	(9,687.62)	(6,524.33)	—	(16,211.95)	(32,032.04)
Other recognised gains / losses					
Gains / losses on investment assets	—	—	1,669.37	1,669.37	3,812.73
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	—	—	—	—	—
Net movement in funds	(5,795.02)	15,564.43	1,669.37	11,438.78	27,712.63
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward	35,630.41	208,508.11	24,175.26	268,313.78	240,601.15
Total funds carried forward	29,835.39	224,072.54	25,844.63	279,752.56	268,313.78

St Mary's Church, Wootton
Analysis of income and expenditure
Selected period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Endowment	This year	Total Last year
Incoming resources						
<i>Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources</i>						
101 - Gift Aided	79,910.00	—	—	—	79,910.00	70,814.56
102 - Tax recovered	21,606.12	—	157.50	—	21,763.62	28,299.37
103 - Other giving	8,322.48	—	—	—	8,322.48	11,001.00
104 - Loose Collections	1,462.76	—	—	—	1,462.76	2,150.73
105 - Gift days- Sundry giving	7,319.25	—	—	—	7,319.25	42,133.82
201 - Given for specific projects	334.30	744.64	15,229.40	—	16,308.34	14,942.18
<i>Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources Totals</i>	118,954.91	744.64	15,386.90	—	135,086.45	169,341.66
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects</i>						
302 - Rent for church buildings	16,918.25	—	—	—	16,918.25	13,176.60
401 - Monies for books	252.00	—	—	—	252.00	489.52
404 - PCC fees Weddings/ Funerals	1,918.00	—	—	—	1,918.00	3,665.00
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects Totals</i>	19,088.25	—	—	—	19,088.25	17,331.12
<i>Investment income</i>						
301 - Interest	—	—	1,203.88	—	1,203.88	1,507.84
<i>Investment income Totals</i>	—	—	1,203.88	—	1,203.88	1,507.84
<i>Other incoming resources</i>						
106 - Wootton Charities	—	—	2,000.00	—	2,000.00	2,000.00
405 - Assigned fees	(36.00)	—	3,718.33	—	3,682.33	5,111.50
601 - Insurance claims	—	—	—	—	—	500.00
<i>Other incoming resources Totals</i>	(36.00)	—	5,718.33	—	5,682.33	7,611.50
Incoming resources Grand totals	138,007.16	744.64	22,309.11	—	161,060.91	195,792.12
Resources used						
<i>Grants payable in furtherance of charity's objects</i>						
1001 - Overseas Mission	4,200.00	1,000.00	—	—	5,200.00	6,100.00
1003 - Home Mission	3,400.00	1,120.00	—	—	4,520.00	4,900.00
<i>Grants payable in furtherance of charity's objects Totals</i>	7,600.00	2,120.00	—	—	9,720.00	11,000.00
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects</i>						
2001 - Diocesan Quota	62,647.00	—	—	—	62,647.00	64,441.00
2002 - Working Expenses of Incumbent	2,361.15	—	—	—	2,361.15	4,613.80
2004 - Assistant Staff	23,417.66	—	937.20	—	24,354.86	35,487.25
2005 - Church Running expense	4,729.49	—	—	—	4,729.49	5,785.65
2006 - Church Maintenance	1,897.12	—	—	—	1,897.12	741.26
2007 - Upkeep of Services	5,904.38	596.16	200.00	—	6,700.54	1,445.18
2008 - Upkeep of Churchyard	—	—	—	—	—	152.00

Appendix Seven

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Endowment	Total	
					This year	Last year
2009 - Costs relating to books	505.93	—	—	—	505.93	807.54
2010 - Church hall	7,841.98	—	2,500.00	—	10,341.98	7,471.57
2012 - Major Works	—	—	—	—	—	4,323.55
2016 - Honoraria, Assigned fees	116.95	—	3,425.33	—	3,542.28	5,122.04
6000 - Studley Road	672.64	—	—	—	672.64	4,274.00
6001 - Folkes Road	17,786.66	—	—	—	17,786.66	11,200.00
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects Totals	127,880.96	596.16	7,062.53	—	135,539.65	145,864.84
Support costs						
2017 - Support Costs	2,186.03	1,024.03	—	—	3,210.06	12,344.00
Support costs Totals	2,186.03	1,024.03	—	—	3,210.06	12,344.00
Expenditure on managing-administering the charity						
4000 - Administration	2,821.79	—	—	—	2,821.79	2,683.38
Expenditure on managing-administering the charity Totals	2,821.79	—	—	—	2,821.79	2,683.38
Resources used Grand totals	140,488.78	3,740.19	7,062.53	—	151,291.50	171,892.22



'You are living stones'

1 Peter 2:5

Administrative Information

St Mary's church is situated in Wootton village, Bedfordshire. It is part of the Diocese of St Albans within the Church of England. The correspondence address is : The Vicarage, Church Road, Wootton, Bedford MK43 9HF.

The Registered charity number 1150817

office@stmaryswootton.org.uk

PCC members who served during the year were:

Revd Peter Ackroyd (chair), Hazel Sanders (churchwarden), Ant Hall (churchwarden), Revd Shaun Atkins, Revd Phillip Young, Philip Wainwright (Treasurer), Dorothy Teh (PCC Secretary), Jim Hignett (Reader; Deanery Synod), Pauline Kendall (Deanery Synod), Tim Dillistone (Deanery Synod), Charles Ashbrook (Deanery Synod), Rob Hamilton, Amanda Newton, Jenny Yang, Jenny Roffey, Annette Hart, Derrick Lowe (retired Sept 2020), Margaret Greenhalgh (retired Sept 2020), Allyson Cable (Electoral Roll Officer) (retired Sept 2020), Matt Hearn (elected Sept 2020), Abi Holyoak (elected Sept 2020)

Independent Examiner: Lynden Richardson

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Wootton Academy Trust (WAT) Annual Report 2020/21

WAT operates Wootton Upper School and Kimberley 16 – 19 College, in Stewartby.

Numbers at the school are strong with around 875 pupils across Years 9, 10 and 11. During the pandemic we have witnessed – in common with most schools – an increase in the number of parents/carers wishing to home educate their children. Numbers at the college continue to grow and there are currently around 650 students. This is expected to grow to 700 in September 2021. WAT operates the largest academic sixth form in Bedfordshire.

The pandemic has had real impacts on many families and we have worked very hard to develop our systems to support families, working with other schools as well as individuals in the village and beyond and businesses, councillors and local authorities, churches and other organizations. We are very grateful to everyone who has helped the school and college during this period.

We know the support that Councillor Wheeler has been able to provide Wootton Upper School is really valuable and we are extremely grateful to him for being willing to allocate funding in this way.

Like all educational settings, we have developed new ways of teaching including on-line lessons when lockdowns have been in place across the country. The widening gaps in attainment and progress between those families with digital equipment and those without it has been well-documented. Locally, the High Sheriff, worked very hard to source laptops and other equipment for all schools and both Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College benefited from this scheme. Bedford Rotary Club also played a big part. Overall, more than 100 lap tops were provided to support individual families. Thank you to everyone who helped.

The pandemic brought an abrupt end to many of our activities were curtailed including sporting fixtures, concerts, trips and visits. We long for all these experiences to return for the benefit of all our pupils and students.

The Peace Garden outside the Library at Wootton Upper School has moved forward – but it is not yet fully finished. Currently lots of tulip bulbs are in bloom: this has really brightened the area and it is now a popular place for pupils to sit and eat their lunch during their break and to read or just to reflect.

The enforced closure enabled our Estates Team to move forward on a number of maintenance projects: much of the school has been repainted and some areas re-carpeted too. One of the biggest changes has been at the front of the school where almost £200,000 was spent on creating a new Reception and meeting rooms. The Trust's application to the government for funding for the project was successful. However, there was a shortfall of around £40,000 and the Trust cannot thank Wootton Parish Council enough for agreeing to fund the excess using CIL funds which are available to WPC. The new Reception has greatly improved safeguarding and we know that parents much appreciate being able to arrive at the school and walk in to reception. The meeting room will be available for community groups to use in the future.

We are finalizing video conferencing facilities in the room so that in the post-pandemic world, we can meet without everyone needing to travel. We have relocated our key support teams to this area including our Safeguarding and Attendance teams, as these are staff who parents/carers often need to see.

Appendix Eight

The Trust has also put in place a new CCTV system at both Wootton Upper School and at Kimberley College. The sixteen “ancient” cameras at Wootton Upper School have been replaced by ninety-two cameras where the images are much clearer. This has also greatly improved safeguarding at the school. Whilst the system in place at Kimberley was not as old, it only had a few cameras. The new system is more extensive.

The Trust is continuing to work with others to improve facilities and opportunities for all of its learners. Much work has taken place in the last twelve months with the Parish Council to enable new sports facilities to be developed, probably over the next sixteen months which will be available for community use in the evenings and weekends. This is a very extensive project and will probably require funding of between £1,000,000 - £1,500,000. Without the leadership and support of key Parish Councillors, as well as the Parish Council as a whole and also Councillor John Wheeler, this project would not be possible. Jon Billington, Vice Chair of WAT, and Steph McMenemy, Finance Lead at WAT are leading on the project for the Trust.

We know that the project once completed will mean that children who attend the school as well as the wider community will have much better facilities available including a full size MUGA, tennis courts and much more.

Improving educational standards is a key priority in every educational setting. The Trust continues to work with local schools in the Wootton and Cranfield area to improve the high quality education which is already provided. Senior Leaders from four local Bedford Borough based schools [Wootton Upper, Wootton Lower, Broadmead Lower and Marston Vale Middle] meet each fortnight to agree common systems so that families can understand more easily how the schools work together. We are determined to put in place a coherent curriculum from Reception through to Year 13 as well as seeking to develop common approaches to how we support families whose children attend any of these schools. We already seek to put on CPD training which is open to staff in all of these schools.

Recruiting staff remains a key challenge in some areas. At secondary level, there is a national shortage of teachers in some teaching subjects including in STEM subjects [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics]. The Trust appointed some teachers in November and December 2020 for September 2021 ... but there are still some gaps to fill before the new timetable can be completed.

Pupils and students and their families have been incredibly well supported over the last twelve months by the senior leadership teams at Wootton Upper School, led by Mrs McMorn, Head of School, and at Kimberley College, led by Mr Detheridge, Head of College. The Trust has received great support from numerous external agencies, notably Bedford Borough Council who have played such an important role during the pandemic as well as offering great School Improvement Team support, which WAT believes provides excellent value for money. The Trust also recognizes the excellent support it receives from the overwhelming majority of its parents/carers. It also recognizes the support that so many Wootton based organizations and groups provide to improve the life chances of young people at the school and the college and to support the wellbeing of all the adults who work and volunteer at the Trust.

Therefore, on behalf of the Trustees and governors, I would like to thank everyone who has helped the Trust over the last year for their immense support and ask them to continue to make the incredible difference they currently do in the year ahead. Thank you all so much.

Michael Gleeson
Executive Principal
Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Baptist Church Annual Report 2020/21

Wootton Baptist Church has been affected by the Covid 19 situation, just as the other organisations in the village. Services were suspended for several months in the last year, together with Coffee Mornings, and youth meetings. Our usual contacts with our own fellowship and others in the village had to be done by telephone, email, zoom or text. Our Adventurers youth group was done on Zoom with the help of another church who had the technical facilities. In this way we have been able to continue, with restrictions, to tell others about the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for which our church stands.

Funerals have been difficult with restricted numbers, but the church has been used in this way during the year.

As the restrictions slowly relax, it has been possible to hold our Sunday morning meetings again. The restrictions are onerous, as we cannot sing, have to wear masks, and observe spacing. It's the older members of the fellowship who suffer the most as they cannot get themselves to the church, and cannot be picked up by car.

To help in keeping the fellowship together, we have issued a weekly Bulletin, with all the news from the church and encouragements we have had. This has helped to make people feel they are wanted and are still part of the fellowship.

Another outreach we have done is to put a free bookstall outside the church, in the car park, for anyone to take and read the Bibles and other Christian literature. This has been a great success as over fifty Bibles have been taken, and many other books. There has been a little vandalism, mainly the sanitiser, which has been stolen three times. It was eventually secured so has not been touched since. The worst enemy is the rain and high wind. The bookstall has been blown over once!.

Hopefully we will soon be able to return to our normal services to the community in presenting God's word as the church has done since 1836.

Rob

Stanton

Wootton Community First Responders Annual Report 2020/21

The Wootton CFR team is growing and has attended numerous calls throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. There are now three CFRs in Wootton, two in Cranfield who are attached to the same team and one from Stewartby, who is undertaking training ahead of joining the team. The monthly checks are still being undertaken for all three Wootton public defibrillators.

Wootton Village Hall Annual Report 2020/21



Wootton Village Hall, on Church Road, was opened on 9th July 1983. Funded by village subscriptions (all villagers were asked to buy a 50p brick!!) and a grant from the Local Authority, it has served the Village for over 37 years. It was built by a local builder (John Newitt) who still lives in the village. A plaque in the foyer lists the villagers who were the first Trustees – Mr T Abbott, Mr M Cooper, Mr A R Martin, Mr I A Maunders, Mr M O'Donnell, Mr D F Perry, Mr B Woodin, Mrs C Abbott, Mrs G M Jones, Mr L Mountain, Mrs L J Maunders, Mrs B J Perry, Mr B Simpson and Mr F G Wright.

The Hall is currently run by a committee which consists of representatives from Village organisations (Parish Council, WI, Bowls Club, Country Players, Brennan School of Dance) and other parishioners.

For 37 years, barely a day has gone by (up to Lockdown in March 2020) when the Hall was not hired out for some reason or another. It was shut for a week about 10 years ago when the floor was replaced, otherwise it has been in continuous use. For many years the committee have been aware that the Hall has needed refurbishing. So, with the Hall shut because of COVID, the committee considered this to be an ideal time to redecorate. Taylor Wimpey and Wootton Parish Council agreed to part fund the work, so in July 2020 the

Appendix Eleven

Hall was redecorated from top (the ceiling) to toe (the skirting boards). Thanks is due to Taylor Wimpey and the Parish Council for supporting the Village Hall. A plaque to note their generosity has been put on the wall in the Hall.

All that was needed then was for users to come and hire the Hall again but COVID prevented that.

In August, with relaxation of some of the restrictions, revised conditions of hire were written to allow for COVID and the Hall was made COVID secure. In September, following Government Guidance, the Hall was reopened for Exercise Classes. These included, Pilates, Yoga, Keep Fit, Martial Arts of various forms, School of Dance and Dog training.

Over the years, the Hall has also been used for parties and other gatherings particularly at weekends. Sadly, that was not possible. The Hall was designed with a stage and Country Players have put on many many productions over the years. Hopefully, when we all get back to normal and the pandemic is behind us, Wootton's budding actors will put on more shows for villagers to go to. The Bowls club is another Community Group which has used the Hall (twice a week) over the years. Neither Country Players nor the Bowls Club have been able to use the Hall since March 2020 because of the pandemic.

As stated above, the Hall was opened in 1983. In 1992 the Hall needed a new caretaker and new bookings clerk. Marie Kramer and Jenny Lambert took the jobs on for three months. They are still in post today 28 years later!! Well done Marie and Jenny. Wootton Village Hall would not have been the success it is without you.

The Village Hall activities were severely affected by the Pandemic in 2020-2021. Revenue from hirings was down to 20% of normal levels. However, with the government's business support grants and furlough schemes the Village Hall now finds itself in a strong financial position.

All exercise classes will be restarted in mid-May and it is hoped that all other hirings will be possible in mid/late summer.

Robert Wallace

On behalf of Wootton Village Hall Committee