

# St. Vigor's Open Meeting

## Meeting

The meeting took place at St. Vigor's Church on Monday 20th June 2022 at 7:30pm, and was led by The Archdeacon of Bath, The Venerable Dr. Adrian Youings. There were 30 people in attendance.

## Setting the scene

### Introduction

The Archdeacon, having already been invited to meet with the PCC on 23rd May 2022 and here at their further invitation to understand the views of the village, introduced himself and his role within the wider church. Special thanks were given to Stratton Parish Council who had delayed their meeting in order to attend.

### Current position

Nothing has been decided or will be decided quickly. St. Vigor's congregation is small in number, elderly and no longer able to fulfil the offices needed to run and maintain it, Most roles and tasks now fall on one person. There are financial challenges. Over £150,000 needs to be raised for essential repairs to the Nave roof, Chancel roof and tower. Further items also need to be addressed [including monuments at £100,000].

The building has difficult access, a lack of parking and no facilities. To improve access and provide toilet and kitchen facilities to facilitate community use and complete all repairs would require a sum of around £1/2 Million or more.

The Church of England and its Dioceses do not have vast amounts of money available. Like all churches, St. Vigor's has to be self-financing - c£13,600 per annum. This includes meeting the cost of the clergy along with St. John's in Chilcompton, with whom they form a Benefice.

### Options

The first two options that have been considered with the Diocese' Church Buildings Adviser are to become a Festival Church, where worship only occurs on occasions such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas, or to become a Chapel of Ease to St.

John's in Chilcompton. However, both options would only transfer the issues of manpower and raising finance elsewhere within the Benefice.

Therefore, the PCC have reluctantly approached The Archdeacon to explore closing St. Vigor's as a place of worship.

## Views and Discussions

The consensus was that those present do not want to see the building itself closed or for it to fall into disrepair. To summarise:

- Should it close as a place of worship, the Diocese would seek to find alternate use before looking to pass it into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust, who themselves are not able to save all such churches.
- In all such cases, access to the churchyard would be maintained.
- Alternate community use would entail sustained commitment by people outside the church, as well as funding over many years.
- It was noted that a concerted effort by villagers over some 20 years has saved the village hall.
- The key question for St. Vigor's is what use could be made of the building.
- It was recognised that being a Grade I Listed Building, changes and repairs would have to meet very high standards.
- Ideas put forward included support from Bath College's Building Apprenticeship scheme and forming a 'Friends of St. Vigor's Group' to maintain and care for the fabric.
- Since 2009 unsuccessful approaches have been made to secure funding to repair the roofs but repairs to the windows in The Knatchbull Chapel (£10,000) and most recently two wall monuments (£15,000) have been achieved.

## Conclusion

The Parish Council / villagers and PCC will need to work together over the next few months to see what is possible.

The meeting closed with prayer.