

## **CHASE BENEFICE COUNCIL**

### **Annual Report for 2021**

The Chase Benefice comprises representatives from the following parishes: Chettle, Farnham, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Tarrant Gunville, Tarrant Hinton, Tarrant Keyneston with Tarrant Crawford, Tarrant Monkton with Tarrant Launceston, Tarrant Rushton with Tarrant Rawston and Tollard Royal and operates under a Scheme of Delegation which came into effect on 1 October 2003.

The Benefice Council met 8 times, with meetings conducted virtually using Zoom.

1. 21 January: chaired by Canon Simon Tong, Benefice Council Lay-Chair
2. 2 February: chaired by Canon Simon Tong, Benefice Council Lay-Chair
3. 10 March: chaired by the Ven Antony MacRow-Wood, the Archdeacon
4. 15 April: chaired by the Ven Antony MacRow-Wood, the Archdeacon
5. 17 June: chaired by the Ven Antony MacRow-Wood, the Archdeacon and Priest in Charge
6. 5 August: chaired by the Ven Antony MacRow-Wood, the Archdeacon and Priest in Charge
7. 21 September: chaired by Revd David Miell, Associate Priest
8. 2 November: chaired by Revd David Miell, Associate Priest.

At the start of the year, the nation was once more in lockdown due to Covid and the Council approved dispensation of services under the Scheme of Delegation. As the year progressed and the regulation around Covid changed periodically, responsibility was placed on Parochial Church Councils to revisit their risk assessments frequently.

In January, the Deanery Synod agreed to implement a trial for pastoral reorganisation. Following this vote, as the proposal voted in at Synod lacked clarity, the Council submitted a proposal to Synod requesting clear milestones and opportunities for regular review of the trial. As a result, the Archdeacon drew up a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the Chase Benefice, outlining how the trial would operate. Having agreed to this Memorandum of Understanding, the Council elected Lizzie Patterson and Gill Baverstock to represent them on the review group. Revd Belinda Marflitt and Canon Richard Hancock started their work with their respective Chase parishes on 1 May and Revd Carolyn Couzens on 1 June.

An interview in March for the position of House for Duty Priest at Tarrant Hinton Rectory was unsuccessful, however at the April meeting, the Council agreed that the Archdeacon should become Priest-in-Charge to the Chase Benefice, pending a future House for Duty appointment. Following a successful interview in June, Revd Dr David Miell was licensed to the Benefice as House for Duty Associate Priest on 26 July. David started working alongside the three Focal Ministers and took on pastoral responsibility for Chettle, Farnham and Tollard Royal.

All parishes continued to make their monthly contributions to the running expenses of the benefice and at the end of 2021, £11,978.06 was available for expenditure, significantly more than required to meet annual expenses. Throughout the year, legal processes for the parishes of Gussage All Saints and Gussage St Michael to leave the Chase Benefice and transfer to the Cranborne benefice were in train; at that point, the Council would have, in addition to refunding the Gussage parishes appropriately, considered proportional refunds to the other parishes. However, since the legal processes for the Gussages took longer than anticipated, no refunds had been made at end of year.

Having committed to the Deanery pastoral organisation experiment, protocols for administration, communication and financial management for the experiment were frequently discussed at

Benefice Council. The Council also discussed changes in legislation to marriage registration; burial policies; parish magazines; the Generous Giving Campaign; Loving in Love & Faith and Fairer Share.

Envisaging that the Gussage parishes would shortly be leaving the benefice, on 15 April Canon Simon Tong resigned as Lay -Chair and Gilly Hescroff was elected in his stead.

The Benefice Council expressed deep gratitude for Simon's contribution. Over many years, he had taken services across the benefice and, in the absence of a priest, he had sensitively chaired Benefice Council meetings. Particular thanks were extended to Simon for his faithful provision of online acts of worship during Covid - from Easter 2020 right through to 30 May 2021. After the last service he was given a generous gift from all those who had 'attended' his services online for many months.

### **Safeguarding Report**

Gill Baverstock continued in the role of Benefice Safeguarding Officer through 2021. Throughout the year she regularly pointed parishes to the Chase Benefice Safeguarding Policy and the flowchart which lists the actions to be taken as the Parochial Church Councils' (PCCs') duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

Since the country was in lockdown for a good part of the year, the Benefice Safeguarding Officer frequently highlighted that families would be experiencing additional stress, possibly resulting in instances of domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns; and that, as Christians, we should do everything we can to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults by reporting any concerns.

The Safeguarding Officer was able to report that she had received no reports from parishioners that gave her cause for concern or required any action.

Since the Church of England nationally was reviewing its safeguarding training framework, the Safeguarding Officer took the opportunity to remind Council members that it was the duty of Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) under the charitable umbrella of the Church of England to ensure that all PCC members and other volunteers are trained in safeguarding to an appropriate level. The Archdeacon reinforced this and requested that everyone's online training should be completed by 31 October 2021. Regrettably, this had not happened and the Safeguarding Officer continued to press Parochial Church Council members to undertake the Basic Awareness course, with the churchwardens undertaking the Basic Awareness and Foundations courses.