

Annual Report from St Andrew's Church to the Parish

Council AGM – 18th May 2026

The church is pleased to be asked to provide this report and to reflect on the last 12 months of life within the parish of St Andrew's indeed in the Combs and Finborough Benefice. Fundamentally the church is in good heart and, whilst a constant struggle, manages to keep its financial head above water thanks to the generosity of a number of people with contributions great and small. It may seem strange to lead on this, but St Andrew's is quite unusual in the Diocese in this respect and clearly other churches run the risk of reduced services, reduced opening hours, even closure, and we recognise that for most people in the village, regular attenders or not, the church is a very important part of the community.

The building is used not only for services but also by Finborough School, Great Finborough Primary School and for weddings, funerals and baptisms – and, from this month, the Rural Coffee caravan. Thanks to the kindness of volunteers, the church is now open 6 days a week and the churchyard is looking cared for. The new Porch windows have been warmly received and we are working hard to move forward on a Porch door. The new church yard plan designed by Bex Harvey is a modern masterpiece and we are very grateful to her for all the work that has been involved in producing it and enabling it to be constantly updated.

It would now seem strange not to see the steeple illuminated and it has brought a real identity to the church within the village landscape. The church with its setting has been identified as a site of particular value to our local and county heritage. This was one of the many reasons the PCC, for the first time in our history, opposed a planning application, and we were particularly impressed and grateful for the thorough and detailed way in which the Parish Council debated the issue and ultimately supported our concerns and opposed the application – thank you!

Fundraising also involves fun – the Fashion Show, Hymns and Pimm's, Ride and Stride, Beacon Club supper, St Andrew's supper, Carols in the Pub – and of course we have now moved into the 21st century with a card machine and indeed QR codes! We are keen to move the church forward and would welcome the addition of some younger members to the Parochial Church Council (meeting 4 times a year) and anyone who is willing to offer their help in whatever way they can. Certainly without the biannual church and churchyard clean and clear up we would struggle and we are always incredibly grateful to those who turn up and work hard.

To conclude thank you to the Parish Council for your work – you make a real difference and we hope we do the same.

Neil Watts, Lay Chair