



Minutes of the **PUBLIC MEETING** of held on Wed 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026, commencing at 6.30pm.

**Present**

**Councillors:** Cllrs: Dave Stewart, Andrew Burroughs, Pete Gosling, Dr Jeremy Lockwood.  
**IW Councillor:** Claire Critchison.  
**Clerk:** Mrs Michala Bailey  
**Public:** 25

The chairman opened the meeting by thanking all those present for attending the meeting and welcomed them to the new HUB building. Fire safety evacuation procedure was given. Penny was thanked for providing refreshments. Mr Archer was thanked for providing a paper explanation of a 'Festival church'.

**01/26 APOLOGIES**

To receive and approve any apologies for absence.

**RESOLVED: Councillor Lynda Burroughs and Councillor Chris Parker sent apologies.**

**02/26 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

To receive any declarations of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests and written requests for dispensations on items forming the agenda.

**RESOLVED: None received.**

**03/26 THE FUTURE OF ST ANDREWS CHURCH**

Rev'd Rob Marsh recognised that there is a lot of community concern regarding the future of the church and rumour of its closure. He wanted to formally record that this is not and has not been declared by the Diocese at this time. However, there are many issues concerning churches, in general, around the country and some within his Parish. He advised that falling numbers has led to a decrease in income, ongoing repairs to the bell tower and clock at St Andrews is a current concern.

The cost of just keeping the doors open currently costs £15k p.a. Income is currently standing at approx. £12k p.a which leaves a shortfall year on year. Rev'd Marsh explained that the Church Council essentially runs the church, led by him. Each year St Andrews must pay a Parish Share (a fee) to the Diocese central funds. Whatever funds are left over pay for heating, training, administration etc. any donations made to the church for specific reasons i.e. bell tower, are ringfenced and only used for that purpose.

The table top sales, currently at the rear of the church raises approx. £2500 p.a. Weddings currently cost in region of £850 but after paying for bell ringers, organist, vergers, that leaves approx. £150 to go into the church funds. In essence, a lot of fundraising is required.

Rev'd Marsh does not make the decision to close the church. That will be made by the Diocese and made on the basis of 1) can the building be maintained? 2) can the bills be paid? to name 2.

The suggestion of a 'festival church' was then discussed. This requires community involvement with no set weekly services but the church can be used for weddings, funerals, baptisms and festival services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. The church will be used for community events, hosting non local, non-worship events like concerts as well as more traditional religious focused ones. Community is very much at the forefront of this idea. The Parish Share is still payable with this option. Rev'd Marsh advised that he is very supportive of this option, however, highlighted the fact that the information previously circulated about a 'festival church' did not present the correct facts.

The second idea of a joint governance, the joining all other churches, has already been rejected and not wanted.

IN SUMMARY: Rev'd Marsh asked for more help from the community to raise much needed funds to keep the church open and paying its bills. If this can not or does not happen and the church is closed, there are 2 options, sell it or allow it fall into disrepair. The more community involvement the less likely the church will close.

#### **04/26 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

##### **Q1. IS ST ANDREWS CHURCH THE ONLY CHURCH IN THIS PREDICTAMENT?**

A. No. this is a nationwide issue.

##### **Q2. WHAT INCOME STREAMS ARE CURRENTLY OPEN TO THE CHURCH?**

A. Fees from weddings, funerals, service collections, donations (some of which are monthly with the added help of gift aid.) The church makes no charge for baptism unless using an organist, so do not receive payment for them. Baptisms are still provided when asked for.

##### **Q3. IS THE BUILDING LISTED?**

A. Yes. All repairs must be carried out in accordance with listed building rules and only by trades recognized by the Diocese.

##### **Q4. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CHURCH BUILDING IF IT IS CLOSED? AND ANY OTHER FEATURES THAT MAKE IS HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT?**

A. There are war graves to consider but the graveyard will become the responsibility of the Isle of Wight Council, who can, after 300 years re-use a grave. The Church Heritage dept will have responsibility for the building.

##### **Q5. HOW IS ST ANDREWS CHURCH CURRENTLY RUN?**

A. The PCC (parochial church council) who are a small group of local people run the financial affairs and maintenance of the church. The church is classed as a Charity under one of umbrella, however, this will change in April 2027 when St Andrews will have to apply for their own charitable status. Should a group of volunteers wish to assist with fundraising; this must be done outside of the PCC.

In addition to questions, one suggestion was to look at Newchurch who recently raised a substantial amount of money by sending out letters to resident's and holiday home owners asking for support as well as looking at grants.

Ward Councillor Critchison thanked Rev'd Marsh and the PC for organising the meeting and suggested a show of hands of those present who would be willing to set up a 'friends of St Andrews' group to look at fundraising and how to make the church more relevant before any decisions are made about its future which may be too late. Rev'd Marsh advised that he was hoping to set up a stall at the Chale Show showcasing the church and its value to the community. Chale show is very supportive of the church. Rev'd Marsh asked those present for any ideas on how to bring more use to the church. Concerts, coffee morning's etc, all ideas are welcome.

**RESOLVED: WC Critchison to collate and co-ordinate a meeting of volunteers. Parish Council to hold a future meeting (sept) for an update.**

**MEETING CONCLUDED AT 7.35PM**