

## **PARISH COUNCIL AGM.**

Father John, Chairman, Fellow Councillors, Fellow Parishioners.

First the good news!

Last year, having reported a deficit of £14,000, we set ourselves the target of breaking even for this financial year.

I am very pleased to be able to report this year that, with God's help, a generous legacy and some very generous smaller donations, we just managed to end the year with a very small surplus of £2,600.

Father John's appeal at the end of February last year – 2012 - resulted in a generous response from Parishioners increasing offertory collections by some 15% which, unfortunately, came too late to have a significant impact on this year's total income. However, the good news is that this level of income seems to have been sustained so far this current year.

I am also pleased to be able to report that we have managed to reduce the long list of outstanding maintenance tasks to a manageable level and, although I am advocating that for this current year we have to continue to limit our expenditure on maintenance to £1,000 a month, we should soon be in a position to move onto a planned maintenance programme which will give us far more and better control on expenditure.

The good news therefore is that we are back on an even keel and we are living within our means. However, we cannot afford to become complacent and we must now do our very best to continue to cover our expenses and rebuild our reserves. We need a healthy Parish to be able to help the very many who are less fortunate than ourselves. Something that this Parish has always been proud to do and, with God's help will always want to go on doing.

During my tenure as Chairman of the finance committee, we have established some principles which I hope will now endure.

The most important of these is that the running costs for the Parish must always be covered by Parish income. In other words, Parishioners must fulfil their obligations and provide enough money each week to cover the costs for running our Church.

Contributions from all other sources, such as the Furniture Market, Fund-raising Events, coffee mornings and so on, cannot be considered as regular income. Such funds allow us to buy the cream to put on our cake.

We have established that each year we should present the Events team with a "wish list" of what improvements we can, need or would like to make on our infrastructure. So each year the team knows how much money we need and what we want to do with it. You've seen the benefit of this over the last two years.

We now have two modern, efficient boilers for our heating and we have just completed the upgrade of the radiators in the church to give us increased heat output. The cost of this enhancement is in the region of £7,000, which again, has come from the Events accounts.

We also have a new, state-of-the-art telephone system. An office, suitably equipped with computers and no longer dependant on the generosity of individual volunteers for carrying out important tasks and maintaining records that must be kept in-house.

We must not forget however that to-day's technology requires regular maintenance and frequent software updates. We can no longer afford to run with what we have until it becomes obsolete, as we had done with the old boilers and telephone system. So you see there is still a great need for Events Funds.

This year, as in previous years, we used the Furniture Market's funds to supplement our income and thanks to their regular donations we were able to carry out some maintenance that had long been overdue.

Maurice Carkett, who asked me to give his apologies to the meeting, also asked me to point out that, unless we can encourage younger members of the Parish to volunteer to give up a couple of hours of their time to help to run this very worthy cause, the market is in real danger of having to close down.

Most of the volunteers currently running the market, have been doing so for many years and many of them, like Maurice, are now getting to an age when moving furniture around is no longer an attractive or suitable part time activity for senior volunteers.

Maurice, I think, is telling us, in the nicest possible way, that the Parish could well be short of the average £12,000 to £13,000 they have been donating each year, unless a new and younger crew can be recruited.

Another good piece of news that I can give you to-day is that the value of gift-aided donations increased this year by £1,810 – 8.6% on the previous year – bringing the Parish up to the Diocese average level. At no extra cost to the tax payers in the Parish who gift-aided their donations, we received £22,902 from the Inland Revenue.

Good as this is, we are sure that there are still tax payers in our Parish who could gift-aid their donations but, who, for whatever reason, have not yet done so. Our task continues to be to encourage and recruit all tax payers to sign up to this valuable and painless source of revenue for the Parish.

We would also ask Parishioners to consider making their weekly contributions by Standing Order through their banks. Not only would this ease the burden on our volunteer cashiers, but it would make it much easier for us to control and manage our finances.

Mr Chairman, I would like to say that, pleased as I am at being able to report that the Parish is back on an even keel, I must also point out that our task is far from being completed.

There is, first and foremost, our need to rebuild our reserves but, we must also face up to the reality that costs will continue to rise. Inflation affects all of us, including our Parish and, much as I hate having to “ask for more” we need to increase our income to cover, at the very least, our inflationary costs.

So, like Oliver, I need to “ask for more”. I have to remind everyone that they should review on an annual basis, how much they contribute to their Church and, if they possibly can afford to do so, to please consider an increase, at the very least to cover inflation.

The detailed accounts are printed on the reverse of the Agenda sheet, but I, or members of the Committee will do our best to answer any questions you may have.

Finally, Mr Chairman, I would like to record my personal thanks to all the members of the Finance Committee, who have supported – or should I say carried me – over the past few stormy years. They have devoted a lot of their time and energy to looking after Parish Affairs and, no doubt, the Good Lord will reward them for their hard work but I would still like to say thank you to them.

John Forte

Chair of the Finance Committee

September 2013.