

Statement made to the Hoe and Worthing Parish Meeting. 26th October 2023 Regarding the Hoe and Worthing Village Hall

The Reverend Rachael Dines. Team Vicar in the Dereham and District Team Ministry.

Thank you for inviting me as the new vicar, in Swanton Morley, Hoe and Beetley with East Bilney, to make a statement about the Hoe and Worthing Village Hall. I will not take questions tonight as I won't have the answers probably at this stage and wouldn't want to misinform you.

I am very new in post, just over four months, and have recently made a point of considering the situation that we find ourselves with the Hoe and Worthing Village Hall. I am still gathering as much information as I can in order to understand the background and how we have arrived at this place.

As a local resident in one of the parishes I serve, I have made a point of getting to as many events and joining in as much as possible with community efforts. I have seen that there is a lot happening in my parishes and in Hoe I attend the twice monthly craft group that meets in the village hall. Indeed, part of my interview was carried out in the village hall. 'trial by buffet' as I like to call it! At that time I thought it was such a wonderful community asset and I was delighted to find this gem of a place clearly being used by the local, and wider, community.

In my conversations with a few local people it is very clear to me that this incredible resource is highly valued by many. It has also been brought to my attention that there are a few issues that need addressing fairly urgently:

- It is sad, but understandable, to see that the management of the hall and the people willing to help with this has dwindled. I make absolutely no comments about individuals, as that would be most unfair, but I can see that at the moment only one person is bearing the load and this is not sustainable. Clearly we need to have a bit of re-invigoration and a clear plan for the way forward.
- In recent years the finances have been kept within the Parish Meeting accounts, and whilst all attendees have the ability to see, clearly, what the movements in the account are, this is not entirely ideal. I note that the recent Breckland Council meeting refused point blank, to make comment on this matter, when requested.

So we have two Ms. Management and Money!

I am not here to tell you that I have a finely worked out plan of action, because I do not. To be honest you, as the people of the parishes, would not appreciate a plan being foisted on you I suspect. We need to work together being mindful that we all have other commitments too. What I will tell you is that I have every intention of valuing our incredibly useful community resource, OUR Village hall.

I need to work with the Diocese of Norwich to find a way forward that is both legal and transparent, so that you will have confidence that what we do will be able to keep our hall going for future generations. There is nothing else like it in these two villages and we need to preserve it for use by all.

Within the conversations with the diocese I will tackle the bank account situation and take legal advice on that, to ensure compliance.

I also need some people to join with me in this endeavour, so that we can use this resource to support our communities. We also need it to be able to continue in the years to come.

I am here to help us all look forward and build on the hard work of those in the past. In doing so I am aware that there have been past agreements that do involve financial help and practical & management support. These will need to be clarified and taken in to account during this process.

I hope that you can see that I have a great desire to enable our village hall to continue to support our communities but that I do need other volunteers in order to make this work. If you are interested in helping us do this then do please contact me, even if you think your offer of help may be limited... any help offered would be most welcome. I cannot do this on my own! Thank you.

My contact details: revd.rachael.dines@gmail.com 07763 211901. 01362 562034